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Uncovering Justice Interests of Victims of Serious Crimes: A Cross-sectional Study

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, victimological research has turned toward the study of victims' perceptions or meanings of justice, challenging the traditional and prevailing understanding of the retributivist approach; this shift in focus locates the present study. Its goal was to assess victims' justice interests and recognize its complexity by identifying victim and crime-related variables that could play a role in shaping those interests. For this propose, a quantitative approach was adopted and victims' justice interests were measured through a scale created for this research. Victim and crime characteristics, together with psychological constructs related to victims' recovery, were considered key variables. The study took place in Santiago of Chile and involved 133 direct and indirect victims of serious crimes - in all cases, criminal investigation processes were ongoing. Descriptive, comparative and correlational analyses were carried out. Once key variables were identified, predictive models for each justice interest were developed using multiple linear regression. Our results illustrated that type of crime, gender, prior victimization and recovery-related psychological variables played a role in shaping and predicting victims' justice interests. The paper concludes discussing the contribution of these findings to research and public policy.

KEYWORDS

victims' needs; victims' rights; psychological recovery; gender; prior victimization

Pemberton and Vanfraechem (2015) argued that the experience of criminal victimization is composed of two angles: harmful and wrongful. Harmful because it involves violence that can comprise various consequences (psychological, physical, material and social) and wrongful due to status/power and value issues. Through a crime, an offender removes power from the victim, violating their rights. Such a wrong cannot be separated from its cause, that is, the offender. This produces damage that goes beyond the material, affecting victim's relationship with society (Duff, 2003).

The harmful and the wrongful nature of a crime might lead to different types of needs (Pemberton & Vanfraechem, 2015). On the one hand, the harmful aspect may imply needs that include emotional and material support. Indeed, victims search for both formal and non-formal support (McCart et al., 2010), as they might have emotional needs (Skogan et al., 1990) such as care, support, assistance, counseling (Ten Boom & Kuijpers, 2012), meaning and acceptance (Kirchhoff et al., 2013). On the

other hand, the wrongful nature of a crime might produce needs related to “justice,” or more precisely; the search of an outcome that could right the wrong caused. It is in this context that the notion of “justice interests” (or “justice needs”)¹ has been proposed.

In this paper, we address the issue of justice interests of victims of crime. We share the results of a quantitative study that assessed justice interests in a sample of victims of serious crime from Santiago of Chile. First, we describe how justice interests can be understood, followed by our research goals, instruments used and results. We conclude this paper by discussing the relevance of our findings, its limitations and implications for practice and further research.

Defining justice interest

The notion of justice interests is part of an important shift in victimological studies, which has turned toward victims’ perceptions of justice, instead of merely assuming the dominant linear and dichotomist notion of justice that implies the retributivist approach (McGlynn & Westmarland, 2019).

Prior research has addressed the issue of victims’ perceptions of justice, offering several different definitions. Shapland et al. (1985) stated that victims have legal needs such as information, participation and proper treatment. In the 1980s, the notion of informational and interpersonal justice emerged, which referred to the extent to which individuals were kept informed and treated with respect (Bies & Moag, 1986). Later, researchers began to emphasize the existence of victims’ specific needs in the context of criminal procedures. Respectful treatment, recognition, information and participation started to appear in the literature (Clark, 2010; Pemberton, 2009; Strang, 2002), together with notions such as accountability and validation (Clark, 2010; Herman, 2005). In the same line, Koss (2010) argued that victims have an “innate motivation to right wrongs” (p. 221) and suggested that victims or survivors needed to have a say in key decisions, get responses, tell their story, feel validated, feel safe, and achieve an outcome that satisfied their emotional and material needs. Jülich and Landon (2017) proposed the notion of a “sense of justice,” which they related to being heard, validated and being able to see accountability, among other dimensions. Ten Boom and Kuijpers (2012) distinguished procedural needs from basic human needs. Among procedural needs, they included proper treatment, the possibility to express themselves, respectful treatment by the authorities, information, being able to ask questions, and overall – process control, which means to be involved in one’s own case and experience reparation by the offender. Bolitho (2015) found that justice needs such as relationships and safety, empowerment, information, venting, growing, accountability and meaning, were all key factors. Daly (2017) uses the notion of victims’ justice interests, defining it as reasonable expectations that victims have in relation to justice mechanisms. She recognizes five justice interests: participation, accountability, validation, vindication and voice. Finally, McGlynn and Westmarland (2019) use, in the context of sexual violence, the concept of “kaleidoscopic justice” to emphasize the complex, dynamic and variable nature of victims’ justice views. These authors identify recognition, dignity, voice, and prevention as important elements of victims’ understanding of justice, among others.

As it can be noted, different authors have proposed different definitions and enlisted different interests or needs. Building upon the work of previous authors, we have identified and selected six justice interests for further exploration in light of the current study. Each interest is outlined succinctly in the following paragraphs.

Participation: Being kept informed (which can be understood as a passive form of participation) has been identified as a very important need of victims of crime (Edwards, 2004). It refers to being informed about the evolution of a case and mechanisms available as well as the ability to ask questions (Daly, 2017). The need for information refers to both receiving information about the criminal procedure and its outcome (Shapland et al., 1985), and the need to understand what happened (Zehr, 2005). In this sense, giving meaning to the victimization experience appears to be highly linked to this need (Bolitho, 2015), as information can contribute to regaining a sense of control that has been taken away by the offender (Achilles & Zehr, 2001; Schiff, 2007). This dimension also implies an “active participation in shaping the elements of redress” (Daly, 2017, p. 11). Participation does not mean victims gain control over final decisions, but rather offering their input throughout the process (Wemmers & Cyr, 2004).

Offender accountability: Victims of crime consider the responsibilities of offenders to be an important aspect of justice (Clark, 2011; Daly, 2017). However, in practice, the criminal justice system often encourages denial (Clark, 2011; Koss, 2006). Daly (2017, p. 15) defined the interest of accountability as “requiring that alleged perpetrators are called to account and held to account for their actions (. . .) expecting that they will take active responsibility for their wrongful behavior.” An offender is accountable when they cooperate with authorities, give accounts and answers, take responsibility for the offense, show remorse and sincerely apologize (Daly, 2017; Daly & Wade, 2017).

Validation: It has been argued that recognizing oneself as a victim of crime is the first step for recovery, because victim identity allows people to make the (necessary) shift from being a victim to being a survivor (Thompson, 2000; Viano, 2000; Zehr, 2005). For Daly (2017) validation occurs when the victim is believed and not blamed, recognizing that an offense occurred and harm was caused. Being believed is not only highly relevant on the path toward recovery (Clark, 2010; Daly, 2017; Herman, 2005), it also constitutes an essential part of experiencing justice (Clark, 2010). Validation can be offered through informal social networks such as immediate family members or the wider community (Herman, 2005), but formal mechanisms might play a key role in meeting such a need (Clark, 2010; Keenan, 2014).

Vindication: Vindication implies signaling the criminal act as a wrong and that action will be taken (Zehr, 2005). Daly (2017) made a distinction between the vindication of the law (affirming that the act was morally and legally wrong) and the vindication of the victim (affirming that the offender’s actions against the victim were wrong). “Victims need assurance that what happened to them was wrong, unfair, undeserved” (Zehr, 2005, p. 28), absolving the victim of responsibility (Achilles & Zehr, 2001).

Voice: Instead of a decontextualized declaration in trial, victims prefer “being able to provide the full context and offending circumstances, being given the opportunity to voice their story, highlighting the impacts of the assaults, and exposing their understanding about the truth of the sexual offending” (Clark, 2010, p. 34). Here, having the possibility to tell their stories in their own words is often very important for victims (Zehr, 2005), which includes describing the criminal event from their own perspective, and expressing both the

immediate aftermath of the crime and its impact on the victim (Achilles & Zehr, 2001). Such a story should be told in a significant setting “where a victim-survivor can receive public recognition and acknowledgement” (Daly, 2017, p. 11). In a similar vein, voice has also been defined as a way to “make sense of the harm experienced in a way that is truly heard by perpetrators, family members and friends” (McGlynn & Westmarland, 2019, p. 192).²

Safety: Zehr (2005) indicated that a sense of safety, both emotional and physical, is one of the most important needs of victims of crime, being crucial for their recovery (Achilles & Zehr, 2001). Safety has been considered one of the most basic needs (Maslow & Murphy, 1954; Ten Boom & Kuijpers, 2012) and constitutes a motivation to seek help (Brickman, 2002). The need for safety was also among the frequently expressed needs in reviewed publications analyzed by Ten Boom and Kuijpers (2012). Safety is considered as one of the most important justice needs in the theoretical framework used by Bolitho (2015),³ who defines it “as physical and emotional safety before, during and after victims’ participation [in a specific justice mechanism] (p. 268).”

Defining the research problem

Justice interests has been a growing but recent topic in the victimological field. For this reason, several issues have remained under addressed. Firstly, most studies that adopt the notion of justice interests or needs have been carried out using qualitative methods (e.g., Clark, 2010; Daly & Wade, 2017; Herman, 2005; Jülich & Landon, 2017; Koss, 2010; McGlynn & Westmarland, 2019; Tamarit Sumalla & Hernández-Hidalgo, 2018). While these studies have allowed a deep understanding of some victims’ expectations regarding justice mechanisms -particularly in cases of sexual violence-, evidence is still insufficient to identify whether justice needs are different from emotional needs, and if they do, to what extent or on what aspects. Some have suggested they do (Daly, 2017; Koss, 2010) as justice interests would focus on experiences of justice/injustice. This distinction is, however, not always made in the literature. Emotional and justice needs are sometimes listed together, especially when discussing criminal justice’s responsiveness to victims. For example, the Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power (United Nations, 1985) established the relevance of implementing justice services that are sensitive to victim’s justice needs, mentioning, among its suggestions, information about their case, consideration of views and concerns, access to assistance, safety and redress. The UN Declaration thus refers to justice needs, including emotional restoration.

Secondly, there is a lack of clarity on what can be considered justice interests or needs, and whether different justice needs could be clearly distinguished from each other. We have seen in the former section that authors do not always coincide when listing justice interests. For example, while some argue that safety can be considered one item of such a list (e.g., Bolitho, 2015), others reject this idea, classifying it as an emotional or survival need (e.g., Daly, 2017; Koss, 2010). Another example of this issue is that some definitions of specific justice needs seem to overlap. In the former section of this paper, we have defined six justice interests. As could be seen in our own description taken from the literature, for instance, the defining aspects of vindication and validation are very close to each other: while vindication could take the blame away from the victim, validation refers to the extent that victim is not blamed. In this sense, we see the need for a more precise delimitation of these terms.

Thirdly, we do not know much about how justice interests differ across groups of victims. It has been argued that justice needs could be interpreted as universal (Bolitho, 2015), because they can be applicable to any person affected by wrongdoing. However, we should not see “victims of crime as a single homogenous group” (Laxminarayan et al., 2013a, p. 123), but rather through an understanding of how such justice interests are expressed across different groups of victims (Holder & Robinson, 2021). Victims’ meanings of justice are inherently nuanced and very complex (Holder, 2015). Understanding such a complexity requires, among other things, identifying how victims differ in terms of their interests, and why. On the one hand, we need to assess how justice interests link with variables that seem to be key in understanding victimization experiences, such as type of crime (Shapland & Hall, 2007), gender (Davies, 2017), and prior victimization (Winkel et al., 2003). Regarding type of crime, the context of sexual violence has been at the center of research (e.g., Clark, 2011; Daly, 2017; Daly & Wade, 2017; Herman, 2005; Jülich & Landon, 2017; Koss, 2010; McGlynn & Westmarland, 2019; Tamarit Sumalla & Hernández-Hidalgo, 2018). In terms of other types of crime, a wider notion of victims’ needs – and not merely justice needs – has been the focus (e.g., Ten Boom & Kuijpers, 2012). Other studies have not explicitly explored the notion of justice interests, but rather focused on perceptions or satisfaction with the criminal justice process of specific groups of victims (e.g., Balde & Wemmers, 2021; Carr et al., 2003), making comparisons among studies problematic. With regard to other variables, to our knowledge, little research has examined the relationship between justice interests and other relevant variables such as gender, prior victimization, and so on, which also appears to be the case with the study of victims’ needs in general (Ten Boom & Kuijpers, 2012).

On the other hand, to understand the complexity of justice needs, we must uncover its relationship with victims’ degree of recovery. So far, research has addressed mental health outcomes of justice processes (Orth, 2002; Parsons & Bergin, 2010) or the link between secondary victimization and procedural justice (Laxminarayan, 2012). However, to our knowledge, no research has been conducted with reference to how psychological dimensions of recovery could shape victims’ expectations about criminal procedures. Instead, some research has sought to question whether victims’ experiences with justice mechanisms vary depending on different levels of “recovery.” Indeed, Daly (2008) documented that victims with “difficult journeys” (a notion that combined various criteria, including experienced stress) tended to perceive “justice was done” less often than victims with “easy journeys.” In a similar vein, the work of Bolívar (2013) has showed that the level of emotional damage seems to play a role in victim’s decision to participate in certain justice mechanisms: victims with lower levels of emotional damage were more likely to engage in restorative justice. Pemberton (2012) argued that the seriousness of an offense could be related to a victim’s preference for punitive responses. Laxminarayan et al. (2013b) observed that, based on evidence from the Netherlands, victims who decided to participate in restorative justice reported less emotional harm than those who chose for victim impact statements. These studies indicate that emotional consequences might be associated with victims’ preferences for specific justice mechanisms, which makes us wonder about emotional consequences’ role in shaping victims’ expectations related to justice.

Objectives of the current research

Given the gaps described, with this paper we aim to quantitatively assess, describe and analyze justice interests of individuals that have experienced a variety of serious crimes. In particular, our study's goals include: 1) describe serious crime victims' justice interests in Santiago, Chile; 2) explore the association between different justice interests; 3) explore the association between justice interests and victims' and crime characteristics; 4) assess the association between justice interests and recovery-related psychological variables; and 5) explore predictive models that could identify key variables to explain preferences for specific justice interests.

Methods⁴

This study adopted a cross-sectional approach and was carried out in Santiago, Chile. The population of the study was adult victims of serious crime users of victim support services⁵ with judicial investigation processes still ongoing.⁶ Victim support professionals initially invited clients, and as potential participants agreed, the research team contacted them to assess inclusion. From an initial list of 252 referred individuals, 133 were surveyed. Participation in this study was strictly voluntary and not linked to material retribution.

The sample composed of 100 women (75.2%), 31 men (23.3%) and 2 other gender (1.5%). Regarding type of crime, we adopted the definition of serious crimes used by the national service of victim support, and therefore considered all cases of adult victims that have been prioritized as target population by this organization, included different situations of interpersonal violence and traffic accidents with serious consequences.⁷ In our sample, 44 respondents were co-victims of homicides (33.1%), 33 traffic accidents (24.8%), 22 sexual violence (16.5%), 20 violent assault (15%) and 14 were victims of injuries or threats (10.5%).

Our sample included both direct victims (78 cases, 58.6%) and co-victims⁸ (55 participants, 41.4%). Most co-victims (44) were relatives of victims of homicide. In five cases, the direct victim had died as a consequence of a traffic accident. Other respondents were relatives of victims who suffered aggression (2) or experienced traffic accidents with long-term consequences (4).

In total, 50 participants (37.6%) reported to have experienced prior victimization (such types of victimization were not explored) and 79 participants (59.4%) reported no previous experience of victimization. In terms of their relationship with the offender, 46 (34.6%) knew the offender prior to the offense, while 81 (60.9%) did not, and six victims did not answer this question. Most offenders of the interviewed victims were male (89.5% against 6.8% female offenders) and 5 participants did not answer this question. With respect to professional assistance, 111 participants (83.5%) indicated having received legal support; 100 participants (75.2%) psychological support; and, 30 victims (22.6%) psychiatric support.

Regarding time elapsed since the crime, the sample was diverse, showing an average of 136 months, with a standard deviation of 22.8 months. When analyzing the distribution of elapsed time, a positive asymmetry was observed (standardized skewness = 17.807), which indicated that most of the crimes had occurred recently. The most recent crime occurred 2.5 months before the assessment and the oldest, 180 months prior.

Instruments

Seven instruments were implemented: a questionnaire that registered general sociodemographic information, a scale that assessed victims' justice interests, and five instruments that measured constructs related to recovery.

In this research, we defined justice interests as victims' expectations regarding specific actions or situations that could occur in the context of their interaction with the criminal justice system that could increase their sense of justice. Recovery was defined as a state composed by a psychological-symptomatic dimension (assessed here through indicators of posttraumatic stress disorder), and a cognitive dimension (assessed through constructs such as perception of damage, perception of the offender, posttraumatic cognitions and posttraumatic growth). Specific instruments used to measure these variables are described below.

The Scale for the Identification of Justice Interests of Victims of Crimes (IJIV Scale)

Due to the lack of preexisting instruments to assess justice interests of victims, this instrument was created within a broader research of which the current paper forms part. The development process followed steps suggested by Muñiz and Fonseca-Pedrero (2019) for the test construction. Such a process included a prior qualitative exploration with the same population that was conducted as part of the larger research project; information that guided the design of indicators and items. The work of Daly and Wade (2017) as well as Bolitho (2015) was also taken into account. As a result, the instrument measured six justice interests, including participation, voice, validation, vindication, offender's acknowledgment and safety. The final version of the instrument included 45 items, which were statements ranked from 1 to 5, where 1 was "irrelevant to my sense of justice" and 5, "crucial to my sense of justice."⁹

On this scale, the six justice interests were conceptually defined as follows:

Participation: Victims are interested in being informed (having the opportunity to ask questions and receive information) and being part of different moments of the process by getting involved in the decision-making process and expressing their opinion.

Offender accountability: Victims are interested in mechanisms that encourage offender's responsibility, and that the offender becomes aware of what they did. Such acknowledgment should imply concrete actions, reflections, expressions of apologies, remorse or any other manifestation of contrition for the harm caused to the victims and to their environment.

Validation: Victims are interested in a justice system that recognizes their victim status and therefore sees them as a blameless person who has experienced harm because of the crime. Others, and in particular judicial authorities, must treat them accordingly. This interest is related to the notion, explicit or implicit, of having experienced a situation that violated his/her rights which need to be revendedicated.

Vindication: Refers to victim's interest that the facts are seen and ratified, morally and legally, as a crime by the criminal justice and society in general. Such ratification can be expressed through material actions (compensation for the emotional or material consequences, economic support, professional support, convictions) or symbolic ones (e.g., expressions of empathy or compassion, judicial agents performing their role with professionalism and competence).

Voice: Refers to a victim's interest in expressing and sharing the crime experienced and its impact from their own perspective. This expression should take place in an official and meaningful context of the criminal procedure, which allows the victim to tell their story in a public sphere, thereby contributing to their recognition.

Safety: Refers to victims' interest in that their emotional or physical vulnerability is recognized by the criminal justice system and that action is taken accordingly.

Examples of the items included: "That my opinion is asked in relevant moments of the procedure" (Participation); "That I am not blamed for what happened" (Validation); "That the offender understands the impact that the offence has had in my life" (Accountability); "That I have an opportunity to express, in a formal moment of the procedure, my experience in relation to the offence and its consequences" (Voice); "That what happened is recognized as a wrong" (Vindication); "That judicial authorities recognize the state of vulnerability I am in" (Safety). On this scale, the higher the score, the more important the item is from the perspective of the respondent. The instrument showed excellent evidence in terms of structural validity (fitting of the six related factor model according to confirmatory factor analysis: RMSEA = .05, CFI = .933, TLI = .929) as well as excellent evidence of reliability (Cronbach's α = .88 for the total scale).

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Symptom Severity scale

(EGS-F; Echeburúa et al., 2017). This is a Spanish scale that was elaborated to assess posttraumatic stress disorder in a forensic context, particularly in cases of victims of serious crimes. The scale is composed of 21 items and 5 dimensions: intrusion, avoiding behavior, cognitive alterations, negative mood and physiologic reactivation. The response options indicated the frequency and intensity of symptoms, from "zero" (*nothing*) to "3" (*5 times per week or more*). Therefore, the higher the score, the higher the posttraumatic stress index. This scale demonstrated adequate levels of reliability and discrimination capacity with this Spanish population, both in terms of dimensions and overall scale (>.70 for dimensions and >.90 for the total score; Echeburúa et al., 2017, 2016). In the present study, the total scale showed adequate indicators of reliability (Cronbach's α = .903).

Damage, and Perception of the Offender scales

These two scales were created and applied in a previous survey in which victims of crime from Spain and Belgium participated (Bolívar, 2012). Perception of the Offender (PO), 4 items- assesses a victim's image of the offender (e.g., "I think the offender acts simply because of selfish reasons") and Damage (D), 5 items- assesses a victim's perception of their level of crime-related damage (e.g., "I can think of what happened without having such negative feelings"). Both scales involved items ranked from 1 to 6. A higher score implied more "damage" and a more negative perception of the offender. In previous research, these scales have presented good reliability (D Cronbach's α = .82; PO Cronbach's α = .67; Bolívar, 2012). In the present study these scales presented adequate evidence of reliability (D Cronbach's α = .72; PO Cronbach's α = .81).

The Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI)

This scale was developed by Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996) to assess positive outcomes reported by persons that had experienced traumatic events in general. In this case, the abbreviated version of the PTGI – which consisted of 10 items – was used (PTGI-SF; Cann et al., 2010). Here, a higher score indicated greater posttraumatic growth. Validity and reliability of this short scale has been studied in different countries and contexts (Cann et al., 2010; Konkoly Thege et al., 2014; Powell et al., 2003; Prati & Pietrantonio, 2014; Qandeel et al., 2014; Weiss & Berger, 2006), including Chile (García & Włodarczyk, 2016). In the present study the scale proved excellent evidence of reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$ for the total scale).

Posttraumatic Cognitions Inventory

(PTCI; Foa et al., 1999; translated and adapted by; Blanco et al., 2010). In 1999, Foa et al. developed the PTCI scale based on theory and evidence of posttraumatic stress disorder. Their scale consisted of 33 items that assessed three factors: negative cognitions about the self (NCS), negative cognitions about the world (NCW), and self-blame (SB). The response options ranged from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree; Foa et al., 1999). Thus, a higher score indicated a higher presence of posttraumatic cognitions. Blanco et al. (2010) translated and adapted this scale to the Hispanic population, which consisted of 36 items that assessed the same three factors and provided evidence of structural convergent validity and excellent levels of internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha > .90$ for total score, and Cronbach's $\alpha > .70$ for each dimension, lower in SB due number of items; Blanco et al., 2010). In the present study, the adapted version of Blanco et al. (2010) was used, showing adequate indicators of reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .948$ for total score, .942 for NCS, .871 for NCW and .679 for SB).

Statistical analysis

In first place, in order to describe the interests of justice of victims of serious crime, a descriptive general analysis was conducted. Later, to identify which variables were related to each justice interest, groups were compared using two different types of analysis. In the case of polychromatic variables, as was the case for type of crime, comparisons were conducted using one-way ANOVA. For each case, value F was reported. When significant differences were obtained, subgroups were calculated using the Games-Howell statistical method and reported using p-value and CI for the differences (post-hoc analysis). In the case of dichotomous variables such as gender, victim-offender relationship (known or unknown offender) and type of victim (direct or co-victim), comparisons were made using an independent t-test. In each of these comparisons, observed means, observed t, p-value, and confidence intervals for the difference of means were reported (CI). For continuous variables, as was the case with the psychological variables, correlation analyses were carried out using Pearson's moment product coefficient. To interpret the effect size of the observed correlations, the criteria recommended by Cohen (1988, 1992) about what constitutes a large or small effect have been followed ($r = .01$ is interpreted as a small effect size; $r = .3$ as medium effect; and $r = .5$ as large effect).

Finally, to address the question about what variables better predict specific justice interests, we used a linear regression model using multiple linear regression analysis (MLR) to develop one model for each justice interest. The outcome or dependent variable of each model- each justice interest- was measured on a continuous scale from 0 to 5. Independent or predictor variables, both dichotomous and continuous, were included in subsequent analyses, following a stepwise method. Only variables that proved to be relevant in previous analyses were proposed for each model. Each model was reported indicating the variables with the highest predictive weight together with the constant values and coefficients.

Results

Describing justice interests

Figure 1 shows how data were distributed in our sample. All interests were highly valued by respondents, but not all to the same extent. Vindication, for example, was an interest that showed the highest mean and less variability among participants. On the contrary, Accountability by the offender showed the lowest mean with more variability within the sample. Details of the mean, median and standard deviation of each interest of justice are shown in Table 1.

The correlation between each interest is reported in Table 2. As suggested by the structure of the instrument used, the correlations observed between justice interests present low to moderate values, so that no correlation is too high to indicate that two interests evaluate the same construct. However, it should be noted that the correlation between Vindication (VIN) and Safety (SAF) was higher than expected, showing a higher shared variability than other interests. This relationship will be taken into consideration later when interpreting the predictive models developed for these two justice interests.

Victims' and offense's variables related to justice interests

In order to explore heterogeneity in victims' justice interests, comparisons per group were made. We can see that, indeed, differences could be observed when comparing per type of crime, gender, and prior victimization.

Regarding type of crime, some differences were observed ($F = 5.663$, $p = .000$). Victims (direct and co-victims) of traffic accidents scored higher on Accountability compared to victims of sexual violence ($p = .041$, $CI = .0171-1.1274$) and violent assault ($p = .007$, $CI = .2265-1.8191$). Validation appeared to be more important for victims of sexual violence ($p = .011$, $CI = .0894 - .9894$). When comparing Safety per type of crime, also some differences emerged ($F = 5.296$, $p = .001$). In particular, sexual violence and physical injury respondents reported higher scores in this interest than did traffic accident respondents ($p = .000$, $CI = .220 - .80$; $p = .013$, $CI = .0637 - .7610$, respectively).

Other variables found to be relevant were prior victimization and gender. Victims who reported previous victimization were more interested in Vindication when compared to victims who did not report such an experience ($t = -2.015$, $p = .046$, $CI = .001 - .178$). In

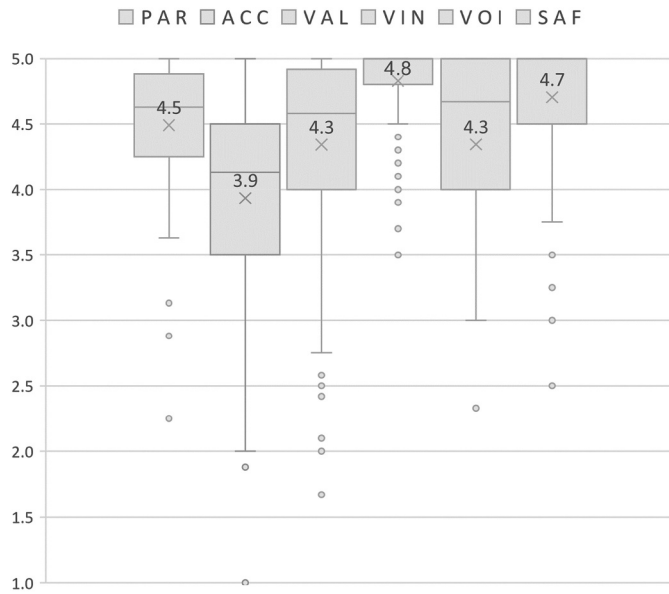


Figure 1. Box plot of observed victims' justice interests (N = 133). PAR = Participation; ACC = Accountability; VAL = Validation; VOI = Voice; SAF = Safety; X = Mean.

Table 1. Descriptive results of each justice interest.

	Mean	Median	Standard deviation (SD)	Min.	Max.
PAR	4.4910	4.625	0.48834	2.25	5
ACC	3.9291	4.125	0.84933	1.00	5
VAL	4.3353	4.5833	0.71683	1.67	5
VIN	4.8263	4.9000	0.28093	3.5	5
VOI	4.3358	4.6667	0.6635	2.33	5
SAF	4.7011	5.0000	0.4752	2.5	5

Table 2. Associations between justice interests.

	ACC	VAL	VIN	VOI	SAF
PAR	.247**	.261**	.415**	.401**	.264**
ACC	–	.395**	.160	.524**	–.050
VAL		–	.355	.514**	.304**
VIN			–	.342**	.623**
VOI				–	.303**
SAF					–

** $p < .01$

terms of gender, female victims reported more interest than male victims in three areas: Participation ($t = 2.701$, $p = .008$, $CI = .071 - .460$), Vindication ($t = 3.581$, $p = .001$, $CI = .098 - .352$) and Voice ($t = 3.047$, $p = .003$, $CI = .141 - .667$).

Our sample did not show differences when comparing groups on victim-offender relationship (victims who knew the offender versus victims who did not), and regarding type of victim (direct or co-victims).

Psychological variables related to recovery and their association with justice interests

Association between justice interests and scales related to recovery provided interesting results. All associations can be seen in Table 3.

Both Participation and Validation interests presented a direct correlation of moderate effect size with Symptom Severity Scale (EGS-F) and Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI). Data also indicates that Accountability interest is inversely correlated with Perception of the offender (PO), with a moderate effect size. Accountability interest presented a direct correlation with PTGI, indicating that victims who presented higher scores of posttraumatic growth tended to be more interested in offender's accountability.

Vindication presented a direct correlation with all scales apart from posttraumatic growth. This means that victims more interested in Vindication also reported high symptomatology, greater perception of harm (D), a more negative perception of the offender (PO) and more negative posttraumatic cognitions, including cognitions about the world (NCW) and about the self (SB).

Voice interest presented a direct correlation with PTGI, indicating that those who reported more indicators of posttraumatic growth were also more interested in voicing their experience.

Finally, our data also indicates that Safety interest is correlated to the seriousness of symptoms (EGS-F), the three dimensions of PTCI, and perception of the offender (PO), which indicates that those with greater interest in safety presented more negative mental health indicators and had a more negative perception of the offender.

Predictive models of each justice interest

To better understand the relevance that different variables could have for each interest of justice, a multiple linear regression analysis was performed to establish a predictive model for each of them. In this exercise, both categorical and continuous variables were considered.

Since the multiple linear regression model only accepts dichotomous categorical variables, those variables that were originally multinomial were recoded into new dichotomous variables. The variable "type of crime," which originally had 5 levels, was recoded into 5 new dummy

Table 3. Associations between scales related to recovery and justice interests.

	EGS-F	D	PO	PTCI				PTGI
				PTCI Score	NCS	NCW	SB	
PAR	,234**	,147	,149	.126	.162	.101	.043	,209*
ACC	,016	,043	-,237**	.090	.138	.003	.085	,230**
VAL	,241**	,154	-,001	.179*	.165	.145	.129	,225*
VIN	,359**	,201*	,335**	.210*	.210*	.199*	.101*	,060
VOI	,148	-,018	,052	.040	.085	-,046	.035	,287**
SAF	,299**	,081	,427**	.239**	.202*	.249**	.235**	,019

EGS-F = Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Symptom Severity scale; D = Damage scale; PO = Perception of the offender scale; PTCI = Posttraumatic cognitions inventory; NCS = Negative cognitions about the self; NCW = Negative cognitions about the world; SB = Self-blame; PTGI: Posttraumatic Growth inventory. ** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$

variables with two levels each (1 = yes, 0 = no). To enter the type of crime as a predictor variable, four of the five dummy variables created have been entered in each case, keeping one as a reference. In these cases, each possible category has an associated beta coefficient.

Table 4 shows the procedure followed to estimate each predictive model in detail.

Participation

The main predictor of Participation was seriousness of symptoms (EGS-F), having an adjusted r^2 of .047, explaining 4,7% of the observed variability, followed by posttraumatic growth (adjusted r^2 increase = .032). Both variables explain 7.9% of the observed variability (adjusted r^2 = .079).

Accountability

The main predictor of this interest was type of crime, which explained 12,1% of the observed variability (adjusted r^2 = .121). A second relevant variable was posttraumatic growth, which meant a model change of 2,4% (adjusted r^2 of .024). Both variables, therefore, accounted for 14.5% of the observed variability in this case (adjusted r^2 = .145).

Table 4. Summary of predictive models of each justice interest.

Predicted interest	Entered variables*	r^2 change	Adjusted r^2	Explained variability	Model Coefficients
PAR	1. Seriousness of symptoms 2. Posttraumatic growth	r^2 = .047 r^2 = .032	.079	7.9%	Constant = 4.036 B1 = 0.250 B2 = 0.190
ACC	1. Type of crime (Referential: Traffic accident) 1.1 Homicide 1.2 Sexual violence 1.3 Violent assault 1.4 Injuries or threats 2. Perception of the offender	r^2 = .121 r^2 = .024	.145	14.5%	Constant = 4.964 B _{1,1} = -0.179 B _{1,2} = -0.432 B _{1,3} = -0.923 B _{1,4} = -0.242 B2 = -0.036
VAL	1. Seriousness of symptoms 2. Type of crime (Referential: Sexual violence) 2.1. Homicide 2.2. Traffic accident 2.3 Violent assault 2.4 Injuries or threats 3. Posttraumatic growth	r^2 = .051 r^2 = .054 r^2 = .036	.141	14.1%	Constant = 3.873 B1 = 0.012 B _{2,1} = -0.549 B _{2,2} = -0.182 B _{2,3} = -0.256 B _{2,4} = -0.226 B3 = 0.013
VIN	1. Seriousness of symptoms 2. Perception of the offender	r^2 = .122 r^2 = .051	.173	17.3%	Constant = 4.314 B1 = 0.006 B2 = 0.016
VOI	1. Posttraumatic growth 2. Gender	r^2 = .077 r^2 = .053	.130	13.0%	Constant = 3.663 B1 = 0.269 B2 = 0.244
SAF	1. Perception of the offender 2. Seriousness of symptoms	r^2 = .174 r^2 = .031	.205	20.5%	Constant = 3.673 B1 = 0.040 B2 = 0.006

Variables are reported in the order of entry, i.e., from the one with the highest predictive weight to the one with the lowest. Adjusted r^2 = adjusted r square.

Validation

This interest is predicted on the basis of three variables, which together explain 14,1% of its variability, namely: seriousness of symptoms (adjusted $r^2 = .051$), type of crime (adjusted r^2 change = .053), and posttraumatic growth (adjusted r^2 change = .036).

Vindication

The main predictor of this justice interest was seriousness of symptoms, which accounted for 12,2% of the observed variability (adjusted r^2 change = .121), followed by perception of the offender (adjusted r^2 change = .051). Both variables together explained 17.3% of the observed variability.

Voice

The two main predictors of this dimension were posttraumatic growth (adjusted $r^2 = .077$) and gender (adjusted r^2 change = .053). Both variables together explained 13% of the variability observed.

Safety

The main predictors of Safety were perception of the offender (adjusted $r^2 = .174$) and seriousness of symptoms (adjusted r^2 change = .031). This way, the final predictive model of the two independent variables explained 20.5% of the variability explained (adjusted $r^2 = .205$).

It is necessary to highlight the similarity between the VIN and SAF models, since they have the same predictor variables, which is partly explained by the shared variability of both interests (Table 2). However, these variables do not have the same predictive value in each model. In the case of the VIN model, the variable with the highest predictive weight is Seriousness of symptoms, while in the SAF model the variable with the highest predictive weight is Perception of the offender (Table 4).

Discussion

This paper focuses on the topic of victim's justice interests. As the literature shows different approaches, definitions and ways of conceptualizing it, the current work has been an exercise of defining, assessing and comparing specific justice interests. In other words, in this study we have made choice for certain justice interests, which have provided results worthy to highlight.

In terms of the way they relate to each other, we observed that most justice interests' correlations presented values that were expected, according to the theoretical and empirical structure of the instrument used: PAR, VOI, ACC and VAL are interests that are distinguishable from each other and might be expressed by victims of serious crime with some independence from each other. However, between the interests Vindication (VIN) and Safety (SAF), the correlation was higher than expected, which means that the interests VIN and SAF tend to be expressed simultaneously. This could imply that they either constitute aspects of the same interest, or are part of a single phenomenon. In this sense, the choice of having assessed VIN and SAF may have been redundant at the level of results. Therefore, it is necessary to reconsider the latter in subsequent studies, both at the theoretical and methodological level.

Descriptively speaking, participants showed, in general, a high interest toward the six dimensions included in the instrument. However not all victims were interested in all dimensions in the same way, which aligns the diversity of experiences of victimization illustrated in the literature. Instead, variations were observed depending on specific variables, such as type of crime, gender, prior victimization, and level of psychological recovery. In Table 5, we present a brief summary of our findings, after which we discuss possible interpretations.

First, different types of crime seem to imply different preferences in terms of justice interests. For example, traffic accident victims were more interested in an offender's Accountability, while sexual violence victims, showed more interest in Validation. On the one hand, we could hypothesize that the "accidental" (unintentional) dimension of traffic victimization could make the victim wonder about the nature and intentions of the other (Bolívar, 2019). On the other hand, sexual violence victims' need for Validation has been widely supported in the literature (e.g., Keenan, 2014; McGlynn & Westmarland, 2019), so our findings offer additional support to the idea that victims expect to feel validated during the criminal justice process¹⁰ in order to increase their sense of justice.

Second, results indicated differences of justice interests per gender. Our findings showed that female victims were more interested in Participation, Vindication and Voice than male victims. The relationship between gender and victims' needs or interests requires to be further researched; however, we are able to offer some initial ideas. On the one hand, we need to keep in mind that, in our sample, type of crime and gender are associated variables ($\text{Chi}^2 = 18.468$, $\Phi = .373$, $p = .018$); female victims tended to experience more sexual violence while male victims tended to experience more robbery with violence and intimidation. On the other hand, female victims presented higher scores on the scale of Severity of Symptoms than male victims ($t = 3.424$, $p = .001$, $\text{CI} = 4.039\text{--}15.105$) and higher scores on Posttraumatic Cognitions ($t = 3.245$, $p = .001$, $\text{CI} = .273\text{--}1.127$), which is in line with previous research (Kar & O'Leary, 2010; Kilpatrick & Acierno, 2003). However, these

Table 5. Summary of findings per justice interest.

Justice interest	Findings
Participation	Female victims were more interested in participation. The predictive model showed, however, that the two most important variables in relation to this interest were the scale of seriousness of symptoms and posttraumatic growth, and not gender.
Accountability	Victims with a more positive perception of the offender, those who reported more growth after the incidence, and victims of traffic accidents particularly valued offender accountability. Type of crime and perception of the offender turned out to be the main predictors of this interest.
Validation	Victims of sexual violence were more interested in validation as well as those who reported higher symptomatology and posttraumatic growth. All these three variables (type of crime, seriousness of symptoms and posttraumatic growth) were relevant within the predictive model.
Voice	This interest was more relevant for female victims, and those who reported higher indicators of posttraumatic growth. Gender and posttraumatic growth scores appeared to be the most relevant variables to predict the interest of voice.
Vindication	Female victims presented more interest in vindication than male victims. This interest was also higher in victims who had experienced prior victimization, had a more negative perception of the offender, reported higher symptomatology, were still experiencing harm from the offense, or who reported more traumatic cognitions. From all these variables, the two most important in predicting a victim's interest in vindication was seriousness of symptoms and perception of the offender.
Safety	This interest was highly present for victims of sexual violence, respondents reporting more severe symptoms, more posttraumatic cognitions, or more negative perception of the offender. The two most important in predicting a victim's interest in safety was their perception of the offender and seriousness of symptoms.

differences could be mediated by cultural or social factors, such as social support (e.g., Andrews et al., 2003). Regarding Vindication, there is some evidence indicating that female victims could be harsher in assessing criminal court results (Neill, 2021),¹¹ but the reasons behind this should be further addressed and explained. For example, a question that would need to be answered in future research is whether gender might play a role in shaping victims' expectations of justice in different types of crimes -beyond of what has been called gender-based crime.¹²

Third, we observed that victims with prior victimization experiences were more interested in Vindication than those who did not refer to such experiences. The question here is whether this reflects stronger punitive attitudes in these respondents (if we accept Daly's (2017) argument that punishment is a component of Vindication),¹³ or whether this reflects victims' damaged trust in criminal institutions (Singer et al., 2019). Perhaps, in our case, the second interpretation could be more correct, as, in our instrument, Vindication's items did not only refer to the judicial outcome but also to the need of seeing the judicial process being carried out by legal professionals in a serious and responsible way.

Fourth, in relation to psychological-related indicators of recovery, the following issues could be observed. On the one hand, certain interests correlated simultaneously with both the seriousness of symptoms and posttraumatic growth, such as Participation and Validation. This might appear contradictory, but previous research on trauma has already confirmed that growth and damage can coexist (Harvey, 2007; Lynch et al., 2007). Perhaps in victims, both aspects are required (a degree of both damage and growth) to build an interest in getting involved and feeling validated in their victim identity. On the other hand, we found that victims who were more interested in Participation, Validation, Voice and Accountability, presented higher scores of Posttraumatic Growth. On the contrary, those interested in Vindication and Safety tended to present poorer mental health indicators, such as higher symptomatology, more negative perceptions of the offender, and more traumatic cognitive appraisals. All these findings reinforce the idea that "level of recovery" could play a role in determining which specific justice interests are more relevant to victims. It is difficult nevertheless to make assumptions about the nature of such a relationship. How exactly might victims' emotional state or mental health condition shape experiences and expectations of justice? Are there other variables mediating such a relationship? These and other questions require further exploration.

Our research has limitations that the reader should consider. Given the difficulties we had in recruiting participants, our sample size was small, random selection was not possible, and types of crime were not equally represented. The study was carried out during the criminal justice process at only one point in time, which is a limitation if we understand victims' notion of "justice" as a phenomenon that evolves over time (Holder & Daly, 2018; McGlynn & Westmarland, 2019; R.L. Holder, 2018; Wemmers, 2013).

Another important limitation of our study lies in what has been referred to as selection bias. This bias originates from all uncontrollable variables that might influence the willingness, or interest, to participate in the study (Langohr, 2021). Selection bias has been identified as one of the main disadvantages of cross-sectional research (Rodríguez & Mendivelso, 2018). The main consequence of selection bias at the level of interpretation is that the associations or distributions of the variables studied may differ from the actual distribution in the broader population of all potential research subjects (Hernán et al.,

2004). In our case, we identify two types of bias: bias caused by voluntary participation, and bias caused by the institutional channel used to access victims. Participants that agreed to take part in our study could have tended to present certain characteristics (for example, fewer symptoms or better experiences with the criminal justice system) that might have had an influence on their decision to participate. Regarding the second type, bias could have also been present in the tendency of victim support professionals to offer the study to some clients and not to others (for example, clients they are close with, or clients with “easier” mental health situations rather than “difficult” cases). Finally, the institutional channel chosen also implies bias: we mainly interviewed victims who had had contact with and received support from victim services. We consider these types of bias unavoidable or difficult to manage in conjunction with ethical criteria, but it is necessary to make them explicit and take them into account when interpreting the results. Working with victims necessarily implies a contrast between methodological rigor, the possibilities of access, and the approach to guarantee the rights of the participants.

In addition, an important limitation to the current study is that some potentially relevant variables were not included in the study design. For example, the type of prior victimization and multiple victimization were not explored. This issue is of particular relevance because 37,6% of our sample experienced prior victimization. Further research could explore this issue. Finally, while validation analysis was conducted to a degree as it took part in the context of a major study, the novel character of the instrument used (IJIV) requires further study and validation across other populations. We must remember that the content of the IJIV instrument, that is, the interests considered, their definitions, and operationalization for each of them, was the result of a theoretical choice. As such, other relevant justice interests could have been left out, or some elements within each interest not being considered. In other words, we are not offering a clear-cut and finite construct. Rather, we are offering a possible way to define and understand justice interests, being fully aware of the possible existence of justice interests outside of the proposed instrument and the diversity of such interests among victims. Further research, especially of qualitative nature, could complement these views and further explore how justice interests express among victims of serious crimes.

In our paper there are questions that remain unanswered. One of them is whether a low score in certain interest actually represents “less interest” or, instead, represents that certain victims express that interest in a different way. For example, does the interest of Validation express differently (and not necessarily in a minor degree) among victims who have experienced crimes different from sexual violence?

Researching justice interests so far has implied focusing on victims’ expectations, and not on how and whether the criminal justice or other justice mechanisms are able to live up to or meet such expectations. Therefore, another issue not addressed in this paper is how justice interests could best be met. Could they only be addressed through participation in justice mechanisms? And if so, how, with what mechanisms, and to what degree could they be met? (E.g., is the interest of Voice met exclusively within the context of formal milestones or moments of the criminal procedure or could it be met through social services outside the procedure, such as victim support?). In addition, it would be interesting to see how expectations (interests) and experiences of justice (the degree that those interests are met) relate to each other and whether the variables identified in this paper are also relevant to understand

how victims experience justice. As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, understanding what “justice” is and what victims require, expect or need from criminal procedures or other justice mechanisms, is just in its beginning and require to be profoundly explored.

Despite the above limitations, our findings indicated relevant results for policy. If victims’ needs should be at the starting point of justice (Achilles & Zehr, 2001) and more has to be done to keep improving victims’ position within criminal justice (Edwards, 2004; Pemberton, 2009; Pemberton & Reynaers, 2011), then the question emerges which “needs” a criminal justice system should focus on. Some suggest there could be a danger in establishing notions such as “healing,” “closure” or “redress” as goals in the context of criminal justice (Daems, 2010; Pemberton & Reynaers, 2011), as this could imply an instrumentalization of offenders and erroneous expectations about criminal procedures (Daems, 2010). Daly (2017) argued that a possible solution for this discussion is to consider victims’ justice interests – and not emotional needs- at the center of justice mechanisms. To this statement we add that, given the large variability in which victims might present in terms of their justice interests, flexibility and diversity must be considered. In the first place, that means that existing criminal justice procedures would benefit from a less rigid interpretation, opening up for a variety of options for victims to interact with the criminal justice system, from traditional procedures to innovative approaches. Secondly, starting from the perspective of the victim and putting their justice interests at the heart of the criminal justice system would mean openness to modifications and constant evaluation of how justice interests might evolve throughout different phases of the criminal justice system and different kinds of justice mechanisms. This way, policy and practice would better represent the diversity of victims experiences, expectations and justice interests. Finally, this research illustrated that there seem to be certain preferences for justice interests among victims of certain types of crime and among groups with different levels of recovery. In case further investigation confirms these tendencies, this could inform policy decisions on shaping justice mechanisms, for example, through putting extra emphasis on certain elements of the process, moving toward more inclusive and better tailored practices.

Notes

1. In this paper, we use the concept of “justice interests”, emphasizing the idea of victims as citizens that pursue justice (Daly, 2017). However, we use both concepts – needs and interests- as exchangeable notions, depending on the author cited.
2. In McGlynn and Westmarland’s (2019), participation is an element of voice.
3. Based on Toews (2006).
4. This study was approved by the Scientific Ethics Committee of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities of the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, ID 170512005.
5. The only type of case excluded was intimate partner violence.
6. In Chile, no restorative justice is available for adult offenders and serious crimes, thus participants of this research were only exposed to a traditional adversarial criminal justice procedure.
7. Even though traffic accidents are not strictly considered “crimes” in Chilean legislation, they are called “quasi-crimes” as they might imply serious consequences even when the perpetrator did not have the direct intention to cause harm. In our study, traffic accidents were only considered when they caused death or serious, long-term injuries.
8. Co-victims refer to indirect victims, that is, “individuals who have familial connections with the victim and are thus indirectly victimized” (Connolly & Gordon, 2015, p. 494).

9. IJIV Scale was applied in Spanish; this version is available upon request.
10. The reader should remember that in this case victims were only exposed to an adversarial traditional criminal justice system. Other justice mechanisms were not assessed on this occasion.
11. Other studies have concluded the contrary (e.g., Applegate et al., 2002; Spiranovic et al., 2012)
12. Female victims' needs, expectations and experiences of justice have been particularly studied in relation to intimate partner violence or sexual violence. See, for example, Mulvihill et al. (2018).
13. We must remind, however, that victimization and punitiveness have not been associated in the literature (e.g., Aertsen, 2010; Mattinson & Mirrlees-Black, 2000; Van Kesteren & Van Dijk, 2010).

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