Psychosocial Safety Climate

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- Psychosocial safety in organizations is about proactively creating an organizational environment where people feel psychologically secure, respected, and able to act without harm to their mental health.
- PSC is defined as the organization-wide climate regarding policies and practices for protecting psychological health and safety, reflecting how seriously psychological well-being is taken by leadership and by the organization

Psychosocial Hazards

- Key psychosocial hazards in contemporary organisations include excessive workload and work intensification, low job control and decision latitude, role ambiguity or conflict, interpersonal conflict and harassment (including workplace bullying and harassment), and high emotional demands that strain members' mental health.
- These hazards are routinely linked to adverse outcomes such as psychological distress, burnout, anxiety and depression, reduced well-being.

Gendered violence as a psychosocial hazard

- Gendered violence and sexual harassment constitute a form of psychosocial hazard rooted in gender-based power imbalances that manifest as abusive, coercive, or demeaning behaviors and acts directed at individuals on the basis of sex, gender, or sexuality within work and organizational settings.
- These behaviors include sexual harassment, gender-based harassment, sexual violence, intimidation, and discrimination and they reflect broader social inequalities.

Psychological Effects

In the short term, individuals may experience shock, fear, confusion, shame, anxiety, or difficulty sleeping and concentrating, along with possible physical injuries or stress-related symptoms.

Over time, these impacts can deepen into long-term challenges such as depression, post-traumatic or complex post-traumatic stress disorder, low self-esteem, trust issues, and difficulties forming or maintaining relationships.

Some people may also develop coping behaviors that affect their health, like substance misuse or withdrawal from social life.

Organizational response can either compound or alleviate these effects.

Systemic, not individual

- Sexual abuse is often framed as the wrongdoing of individuals, but it is also shaped and enabled by systemic forces at societal and organisational levels.
- Cultural norms that tolerate gender inequality and power imbalances or devalue certain identities can create environments where harmful behaviour is minimised or excused, or at worst, where victims are blamed.
- Within organisations, weak accountability structures, opaque reporting processes, and hierarchies that concentrate power and authority can discourage victims from speaking out and allow perpetrators to act with impunity.
- Addressing sexual abuse therefore requires not only holding individuals accountable, but also reforming the structures, norms, and institutional practices that enable it to occur and persist.

A Call for Institutional Courage

- “an institution’s commitment to seek the truth and engage in moral action, despite unpleasantness, risk, and short-term cost. It is a pledge to protect and care for those who depend on the institution. It is a compass oriented to the common good of individuals, institutions, and the world. It is a force that transforms institutions into more accountable, equitable, effective places for everyone.” (Center for Institutional Courage)