

MAPPING THRESHOLD CONCEPTS AND TERMS FOR OPERATIONALIZATION IN IDENTIFYING AND RESPONDING TO INSTITUTIONAL / ORGANISATIONAL HARM

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Introduction

This research develops a glossary of threshold concepts for understanding organizational victimization and de-victimization across diverse institutional settings — educational, sports, corporate, state, and religious / care. The framework operationalizes key terms for identifying harm patterns and implementing effective responses.

Core Threshold Concepts

- **Institutional Harm:** harm caused by institutions directly or through failure of duty of care to members or stakeholders.
- **Organizational Culture:** shared assumptions, values and practices that structure institutional life.
- **Institutional Betrayal:** when institutions fail to prevent or respond to harm, prioritizing self-protection over victim welfare.
- **Victimogenic vs. Protective Culture:** cultures that enable harm versus those that prevent it.
- **Institutional Courage:** capacity to prioritize integrity and protection over reputation; restorative justice responses in organizational contexts.

Operational Terms for Identification

- 1 **Whistleblowers / Alerters:** individuals who expose institutional wrongdoing despite personal risk.
- 2 **Reporting Channels:** formal and informal pathways for disclosing institutional harm.
- 3 **Risk and Protective Factors:** individual, organizational, contextual, cultural and spatial elements that raise or lower harm likelihood.
- 4 **Harm Index:** measurement tool for assessing scope and severity of institutional harm.
- 5 **Open Secret:** collectively known but institutionally denied harm within organizations.

Operational Terms for Response

- Investigation and Reparation Commissions
- Restorative Engagement processes
- Accountability / Responsibilization mechanisms
- Trauma-Informed Approach to victim support
- Safeguarding mechanisms and protocols
- Compliance Programmes and institutional protocols

Key Challenges

- Institutional Inertia and Risk Aversion to Change
- Organizational Moral Superiority as barrier to reform
- Disparity in spaces and times of harm, reporting and reparation
- Secondary Victimization through institutional processes
- Institutional Silencing vs. Institutional Listening dynamics

Transformative Framework

Moving from individual “rotten apples” to systemic “rotten barrel” analysis enables comprehensive institutional reform. The framework links individual healing with organizational change, establishes a Culture of Reparation, and applies Implementation Science principles for sustainable transformation.



Cross-Institutional Scope: settings where organizational harm is identified and addressed



Educational



Sports



Corporate

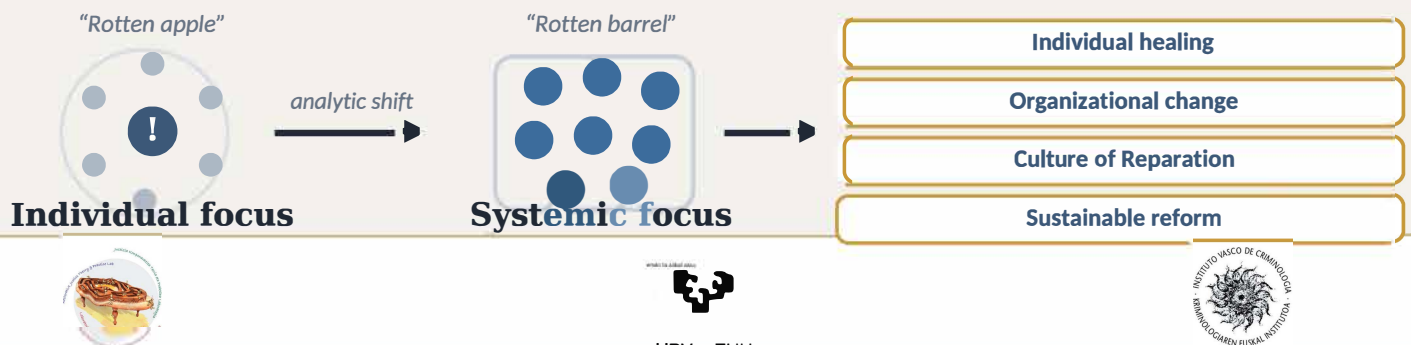


State



Religious / Care

From “Rotten Apple” to “Rotten Barrel”: the analytic shift



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