

The ethical issue of sexual harassment in the army research paper examples

[Government](#), [Army](#)



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Various scholars and academic experts have defined ethics differently at different times. It is a discipline that cannot be assigned a single definition because it embraces many principles and philosophies and its application is in almost all fields and professions. The concepts of ethics can for instance be applied in the practice of law, medicine, and the military. As a general definition, ethics can be said to be a set of pre-determined guidelines that govern the conduct of the parties concerned in the context of the institution or profession where such principles are designed (Barlett, 2011). The role of ethics is fundamentally to govern the behavior and conduct of the professions. It provides a basic guideline that should guide the people's acts and deeds in the cause of their professional duties. In addition to providing guidelines, ethics is one of the most important tools in the decision making process. Decision making can be difficult in cases where a dilemma exists. A dilemma is said to exist when two situations need priority, and at the same time, both situations are of equal importance and carry the same weight. Here, ethics guides the decision maker on which option to go by. When discussing ethics with regard to some particular profession, it is important to first identify the ethical issues that are characteristic of that particular field, looking at their root causes, evaluating the impacts they have on the professionals of that field and the field as a whole, and finally coming up with appropriate recommendations on how to eliminate or mitigate these issues starting with the root cause. This paper seeks to explain the major issues of ethics in the military, the root causes of such issues, the effects such issues have had in the army and give recommendations and propositions thereof.

Sexual harassment in the army

There are many issues of ethics in the military profession and other armed forces of many countries. The issues are quite a number and can be attributed to the strict and almost inhumane setting in which the military personnel operates. One most conspicuous issue is the issue of sexual harassment. The military personnel may not be the most conspicuous or outspoken people in the civilian world of a peaceful country (Chaffee, 2012). By talking of sexual harassment we are referring to sexual acts that are morally unjustified in the community. Much as the definition of that which is morally wrong or right varies from one community to another or from one jurisdiction to another, this can be addressed from the point of view of natural justice.

Perhaps, one of the ethical issues in the military and other armed professions is the menace of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment has no clear legal definition but is that which constitutes harassment in the sexual sense is rather apparent (Preston, 2007). Basing on the elements of sexual harassment, it can be said to be any act by an individual or a group of individuals that makes another person feel offended with regard to their sexuality. The elements of sexual harassment may vary from one jurisdiction to another, but ethically, all forms of sexual harassments are wrong. In the military, it is common to find the senior officers seeking sexual favors from the juniors, especially the female junior servicemen, in return of unjustified promotions in rank and other favors relating to the deployment.

According to the report of the secretary of the army, sexual harassment took two forms. The first form of sexual harassment was harassment by rank and

gender. This is a type of sexual harassment that comprises of sexual discrimination and sexual exploitation. The idea of exploiting a person based on gender with the aim of self gratification and promises of better employment terms and promotions in ranks was found to be a serious occurrence in the military. This involved senior people in the army, engaging the juniors in this forms of malpractice. The report indicated that the major victims of sexual harassment were the female juniors who fell prey to the senior officers who were majorly male (The Secretary of the Army's, 1997). The report also established that sexual harassment also took the form of race and gender. At this point it is worth noting that gender is the core of sexual harassment. The report established that people were harassed sexually and exploited because of their racial backgrounds. This majorly affected the black people of non-American origin who aspired to work in the military. This basically took place during the initial stages of recruitment and training. Again this involved the senior people on the military. The report noted that sexual harassment and exploitation usually involves the seniors in the military systems. This is because of the power and authority they are given. Harassing juniors is a double fold crime as it also involves the misuse of power (The Secretary of the Army's, 1997)

In addition to the above forms of sexual harassment, one other serious type of the same is harassment that amounts to promiscuity. Promiscuity is said to be real in circumstances where one or both of the spouses in a relationship or a marriage is adulterous or has such intentions (Preston, 2007). It is also referred to as unfaithfulness or simply, cheating. This is one of the most common unethical acts associated with the people in the

military. There are so many relationships among the people in the forces. This is common between the senior officers and the junior employees. The engaging in such acts for some form of selfish satisfactions and gratifications is the most unjustified thing.

The root cause of sexual harassment

The above discussed forms of sexual harassment in the military can be attributed to various reasons. Arguably, however, the chief cause of these forms of sexual harassment is the military environment. The military setting is one that is governed by very many rules and regulations that should be strictly adhered to without questions (Singer, 2011). The strict and rigid schedules they work with impact very negatively on the mental makeup of the soldiers. This causes changes in their behaviors and conducts. In analyzing the military environment as the root cause of the ethical issue of sexual harassment, the environment should be analyzed systematically by considering one aspect of it at a time. These aspects contribute to the harassment equally and to the same extent.

The military environment in which the army personnel operate is full of frustrations. The frustrations within this environment may be caused by such things as poor pay and demoralizing physical conditions. Psychoanalytic experts argue that frustrations may cause a person to engage in some irrational acts. This is simply because frustrations are a chief cause of stress. Psychologists say that a person who has been stressed to the extent of depression is like a walking time bomb waiting to explode. Once such a person gets the chance to release their anger, they may mishandle another

person. The experts in the field of psychology refer to this act as displacement of stress. The soldiers who go to war may engage in the sexual harassment as a way of displacing their stress and depressions (Preston, 2007).

The military environment is often a confining one. The soldiers and other army personnel spend a good part of their time within the incarceration of the military camps. This form of enclosure and physical restriction limits the army personnel from interacting with the general public (Singer, 2011). This makes them become anti-social people with weird tendencies. They do not get the time to share and compare ideas with the more exposed civil public. Their antisocial tendencies make them feel alienated by the civilian community. They feel they do not match up to the standards of the common citizen who is informed on all happenings around the world. This feeling of zero affiliation, makes them develop some kind of attitude towards the other people; an attitude of implicit enmity. When they go on missions, they sexually harass and maltreat the innocent civilians as a way of exercising superiority.

Other causes of such unethical acts include racism and lack of understanding. Fundamentally, the army of a certain country is made up of members who are citizens or nationals of that country. The fact that this military environment does not provide for diversity of cultures and races, is very detrimental (Stiehm, 2002). This is because some soldiers with personal inefficiencies such as sadistic racism will perform inhuman acts on the people of other races. Again, pointing to Iraq, this was a root cause of the sexual harassment. The racism in some people is made worse by the verity

that they are more powerful than others. Ethnicity, racism and other lines of discrimination are unethical practices since the principles of ethics hold that all human beings are equal and should be subjected to the same circumstances under the same conditions.

Unequal treatments along the lines of gender were reported in the military. These dissimilar treatments were reported in the secretary's report after a thorough survey and a series of random interviews among the recruited and the enlisted military personnel. The interviews and studies indicated that 51% of the women in the units agreed that the treatment in the units was depended to a great extent on gender. 22% of the male soldiers also attested to the same. This prompted further interviews that established that 7% of the men reported sexual harassment in the units. The women that reported sexual harassment were 22%. the report further explained that sexual discrimination was far much rampant in the army circles than sexual harassment.

The impact of sexual harassment and related malpractices on the army

The menace of sexual harassment in the military has had various impacts on the system as a whole. One major impact of these acts is immense mistrust. The fact that these people are associated with sexual hostility makes them appear like wild animals that cannot be trusted at all (Barlett, 2011). The mistrust exists among themselves, as well as between them and other members of the public. Contrary to the manner it should be, the members of the public in the areas facing disasters such as genocides fear the military personnel. They are not willing to cooperate with them at any one point. This

makes the military operations in the areas become difficult to execute. It also leads to loss of lives and property (The Secretary of the Army's, 1997). Another major effect of such acts on the military is poor reputation. Sexual harassment among the members of the military gives them a very bad reputation. An army that is associated with poor reputation is not considered for peacekeeping missions that are facilitated by the United Nations Security Council. The fact that a country's army has a poor reputation discourages military partnerships between countries (Chaffee, 2012). Military partnerships are very important for the countries that engage in them and for the regions in which such countries are found. This is to say that harassment among the military personnel may be a social cost not only to the nation but also to the region and by extension to the world.

Sexual harassment in the army may cause so many unforeseen disturbances both to the army personnel and the victims of such acts (Stiehm, 2002).

Such disturbances include sexually transmitted diseases. Most of the sexually transmitted infections are deadly in nature. They cause death and many other complications. Cases of HIV/AIDS are very rampant in the army. Further to this menace, the victims of these sexual brutalities remain traumatized and infected with diseases. This is a big abuse to humanity and serious breach to the principles of natural justice. Among other disturbances is the issue of uncalled-for pregnancies. Other serious disciplinary measures taken against perpetrators of such acts include expulsions and demotions. This causes disability in the military systems and the lives of the affected individual. This turns out to affect the country as a whole. It can hence be

said to be social cost resulting from the breach of trust and other principles of philosophy.

Recommendations to deal with the root cause

The second way of eliminating this root cause is investing seriously in military intelligence corps. These should be deployed with together with the other troops and entrusted with the duty of collecting information and reporting the perpetrators of such heinous and unethical acts for appropriate disciplinary action. The reported cases should be taken care of with a lot of significance. They should be expelled from the army and made to face criminal charges in the martial courts.

Proper implementation of the Equal Opportunity policy should be practiced. Those entrusted with the duty of overseeing the implementation of this EO strategy should be well informed of all happenings within the armed forces. They should be involved at every stage of the system, from the basic military or combat training to the advanced individual retraining and development at the highest ranks (The Secretary of the Army's, 1997)

Instituting strong disciplinary measures in the military structure will be of great help as it will instill respect among the members of the military.

Threats of firing and demotion instill fear in the army men and women. The end result is enhanced discipline and high standards of ethics. Educating the top military officials on the human aspects of armed conflict may help a great deal in reducing the sexual harassment cases in the army. Human relations training should be carried out starting from the senior-most officers.

The aspect of equal employment opportunity should be reviewed in the military circles. This will do away with the problem of racism. As indicated by the report, the senior officers in the military sexually harassed the juniors on the grounds of rank and the race. Such things are racial discrimination contribute greatly to the harassment menace. It is therefore necessary for the administration to review and evaluate the equal employment opportunity program. Evaluation of this program will involve major changes to the recruitment program and this will reduce corruption, exploitation and sexual harassment.

The report done by the secretary indicated that the equal employment opportunity offices were understaffed and that, that was the main reason behind the inefficiencies in the system. Together with reviewing the program therefore, the staffing aspect of it ought to be looked at with a lot of seriousness. It is rather obvious that one of the major cause of inefficiencies in any system is understaffing. And understaffed function is not motivated at all.

Research on the same subject has pointed to inadequate training as one of the causes of unethical behavior in the military. The military training comes in phases and these include the basic military training, the advanced training and the refresher courses. All this levels of training should embrace lessons on sexual harassment. It should educate both the junior officers and the supervisors on all that needs to be done with regard to sexual harassment. Adequate training is bound to reduce chances of misapprehension and apparent two-facedness.

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