



Sexual Harassment Prevention

Case Study: Online Sexual Harassment

Case of Marine Tik Tok



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Overview

This facilitation guide and accompanying case study have been prepared to assist all leaders who supervise both military and civilian employees. Equal opportunity (EO) and equal employment opportunity (EEO) professionals, practitioners, and leaders can use this guide to review and educate their members on policies, acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, and tactics to eliminate sexual harassment behaviors.

Facilitation Guidance

It is highly encouraged to select facilitators such as EO and (EEO) professionals and practitioners to explore the complex dynamics of real-life situations, identify the issues involved, and utilize tools to address those issues. Facilitators must provide a controlled, safe, and non-attributional environment where individuals will be willing to share their perspectives. Throughout this guide, questions are framed to stimulate thoughts on areas to explore and consider in this process and applicable to the specific topic.

Content and Resources

The case synopsis gives insight into the case, key details, and findings. The case study references section provides additional detailed information relevant to the situation. Below this section, there are additional resources on similar cases that support specific aspects of this case and can be used to promote a more in-depth understanding of the dynamic issues related to sexual harassment and workplace climate.

Facilitation Instructions

1. Before the training:
 - a. Ensure the location and applicable resources (handouts) are prepared.
 - b. Ensure the facilitator is prepared.
 - c. Ensure the audience is prepared.
2. During the training:
 - a. Read the purpose and introduction. Answer any questions from the learners.
 - b. Read the definition of hazing or provide a handout/visual aid of the definition.
 - c. Read the case study.
 - d. Use the group discussion questions to facilitate open dialogue while encouraging independent responses from everyone.
 - e. Use the individual questions with anticipated responses (AR) as an opportunity to include all members in the discussion.
 - f. Conclude the session by summarizing the case study and the main points discussed during the discussion.
3. After the training:
 - a. Conduct a follow-up assessment to determine the training effectiveness:
 - i. What went right?
 - ii. What went wrong?



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- iii. What could be done better next time?
- b. Share the findings with the leadership and revise future training sessions as needed.
- c. Monitor the organization for progress.

Case Study: Sexual Harassment

Purpose: The purpose of this case study is to provide critical information for:

- Identifying sexual harassment behaviors
- Understanding the leaders' and individuals' roles in preventing sexual harassment
- Responding to individuals who are involved in situations of sexual harassment
- Highlighting the role that climate and other factors play in sexual harassment and prevention
- Acknowledging how other types of harassment are often involved in sexual harassment
- Applying actionable approaches at the individual and leader levels

Introduction

Analyzing case studies is essential for comprehending the complex nature of sexual harassment in the workplace. The complexity of real-world situations and the dynamic interplay of human factors contribute to sexual harassment often arising from a confluence of various elements. By delving into case studies, we gain valuable insights into the challenges that contribute to sexual harassment and the multifaceted roles leaders play – either in perpetuating or mitigating these issues. We can also evaluate the effectiveness of various prevention strategies in complex, real-world contexts.

Case studies allow us to explore the interconnectedness of factors such as organizational climate, power dynamics, communication breakdowns, and individual behaviors. This exploration fosters a deeper appreciation for the intricacies of sexual harassment, which frequently involves conflicting interests, ambiguous situations, and a wide range of human emotions. Understanding these complexities equips us with the knowledge and tools to cultivate a healthier, more supportive work environment, where practical and sustainable prevention approaches can be implemented.

The root causes of sexual harassment are rarely straightforward. Organizational climate, leadership actions, and patterns of human interaction are almost always implicated. For example, a lax or permissive climate can normalize sexual harassment behaviors through social acceptance of the behavior itself or certain perspectives. Similarly, leaders who condone sexual harassment as acceptable, fail to address it with urgency, neglect to enforce appropriate consequences, or simply turn a blind eye, contributing to its continuation and potential escalation. Furthermore, sexual harassment frequently involves perceived or accepted differences in power dynamics, blurring the lines with other forms of harassment like discrimination, and can leave targets feeling more susceptible to issues of retaliation.



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This case study exploration will focus on how different factors contribute to sexual harassment and how identifying and addressing these factors can prevent future occurrences and improve the overall workplace climate.

Disclaimer:

This training is for awareness and educational purposes only. This case study may evoke feelings or emotions. If anyone experiences any adverse reactions, they should seek professional support. All topics discussed in this session are NOT substitutes for medical advice.

Definitions

DoDI 1020.03, Change 3. Effective: January 17, 2025 (military-only)

A category of harassment that is sexual in nature, including but not limited to, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and repeated deliberate offensive comments or gestures of a sexual nature. Conduct that constitutes an offense at Paragraph 107a of Part IV of the Manual for Courts-Martial is punishable under Article 134 of the UCMJ.

DoDI 1020.04 Change 1. Effective January 17, 2025 (civilian-only)

Unlawful discriminatory harassment that is based on conduct of a sexual nature. It involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- It explicitly or implicitly becomes a term or condition of a person's job, pay, or career. For example:
 - Submission to or rejection of such conduct by a person is used as a basis for career or employment decisions affecting that person; or
 - Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance.
- It is so severe or pervasive that a reasonable person would perceive, and the DoD civilian employee does perceive, the environment as hostile or offensive.
- Conduct that constitutes an offense at Paragraph 107a of Part IV of the Manual for Courts-Martial is punishable under Article 134 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Other Harassment Behaviors

Other behaviors, including other harassment behaviors and natural human behaviors, are common in cases of sexual harassment. As a result, defining a situation as sexual harassment can sometimes be difficult, as the intension of behaviors can muddle the understanding of what motivated the incident. Additionally, sexual harassment behaviors are particularly affected by factors of power differentials within an organization. These differentials can be evident, such as the hierarchical structure of the military, or subtle, such as differences in sex or age.

Case Synopsis

A Marine posted a Tik-Tok video summarizing her distress over how her case of sexual harassment while on deployment had been handled and subsequently had to serve directly alongside the Service member she had reported for the offenses against her. Reports indicate



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that the perpetrator admitted to taking personal (nude) photographs from the Marine's phone and distributed them. The perpetrator was eventually removed from the installation.

The Marine recounts that she had to put in great effort to get answers and updates regarding her case, having to seek out members of her command for updates repeatedly. She eventually received unofficial word from a junior Service member who informed her that the perpetrator would receive an administrative punishment. Reports indicate that this included a reduction in rank and loss of pay. When the Marine returned home, she discovered she would work in the same office as the perpetrator.

The targeted Marine was later moved to another command after she reached out to a former commander who aided her in the process. The Marine described further emotional injury when she faced the perpetrator in court, also being confronted with several of her former peers who came to the defense of the perpetrator, minimizing his offense. The Marine describes that the words of her former peers left her feeling very betrayed. Ultimately, the perpetrator was honorably discharged from service. This would leave him eligible to go on to pursue a career with another military component.

Group Discussion

*Note: These are suggested questions. Potential responses are included below each question.

1. Based on the case synopsis, what actions of these Service members constitute sexual harassment?
 - a. Taking the pictures without the target's permission.
 - b. Distributing the pictures without the target's permission.
 - c. Distributing the pictures even with the target's permission may still be sexual harassment if other viewers are not receptive to viewing images of a sexual nature and do not consent.
2. In this situation of sexual harassment, what other types of harassment played a role and how?
 - a. Discrimination based on sex because the images were taken and distributed because she is a woman.
 - b. The way this case was handled and the fact that the target was required to work in the same office as the perpetrator after she filed a report left the target vulnerable to retaliation.
 - c. The distribution of the explicit images of the target could have left the target vulnerable to sexual assault, particularly if an attitude of disrespect is prevalent and accepted within the climate.
3. What were the factors that likely contributed to the climate?
 - a. The perpetrator and target were on deployment, which can bring additional stress. Stressful environments without adequate opportunities to release stress can make harassment behaviors more likely.



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- b. Negative attitudes towards women in the unit may have made it feel good or appropriate to undermine the target's reputation and privacy by distributing the photos.
- 4. What factors of interaction prior to deployment could have helped to mitigate or prevent sexual harassment? Consider the following:
 - a. Training directed at leaders emphasizing the importance of discouraging sexual harassment behaviors.
 - b. Promoting comradery and cohesion amongst the team, including respect of privacy and integrity.
- 5. What were the points of failure in responding to and preventing the situation?
 - a. Lack of leader accountability– the target's leaders did not communicate with the target regarding her case and failed to ensure her safety by allowing her to be assigned to work within close proximity of the perpetrator.
 - b. Lack of Service member accountability– the perpetrator was in a position where they were expected to uphold and protect individuals such as the Service member they targeted.
- 6. What are some long-term effects of a case like this on the organization regarding climate, mission productivity, and mental and physical health?
 - a. Climate:
 - i. Loss of trust and morale
 - ii. Continuation of negative attitudes towards women in the military
 - iii. Perpetuation of overly masculine ideals
 - b. Mission productivity:
 - i. Inhibited ability to accomplish tasks
 - ii. Compromised integrity of the organization
 - c. Mental and physical health:
 - i. Increased anxiety or depression and feelings of isolation
 - ii. Physical harm and death

Questions

1. Imagine you are a Service member who has become aware of the photos shared by the perpetrator. What are some bystander intervention strategies you could use to intervene?

Responses to listen for:

- a. Refuse to participate in viewing the photos, pointing out to others that it could be not only disrespectful to the target but that possessing and distributing them without permission from the person in the pictures could be sexual harassment.
- b. With appropriate care, bring knowledge of the pictures to the attention of the target and offer to support them through the reporting process.
- c. Alert supervisory personnel to the situation, such as a commander or other immediate superior.
- d. File a report with an EO or IG.



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- e. Ask for guidance from another peer, trusted mentor, or chaplain for appropriate next steps.

2. What steps or mitigating strategies do you think could help support a better climate or group cohesion in a situation like what is described in the case study?

Responses to listen for:

- a. Climate monitoring of attitudes between Service members, particularly regarding sex groups as it applies to this situation.
- b. Training and other awareness efforts pertaining to keeping private information safe and the risks of information existing in digital forms, including proper ways to safeguard information.
- c. Outlets for stress relief when off duty and available activities for downtime.

3. What role did leaders have in this situation, and how could it have been handled better?

Responses to listen for:

- a. The target leaders should have been more upfront and timelier with communication about developments in the report.
- b. Steps should have been taken to ensure the perpetrator and target were not assigned to the same working areas.
- c. The perpetrator was in a position of support for individuals in similar situations. While anyone can make a mistake or have a situation of poor judgment, it is important that leaders who place personnel in such roles ensure they receive proper training and are the best fit for the role.

4. Do you feel comfortable expressing concerns regarding sexual harassment in your organization? If not, why? If so, what factors help you to feel comfortable expressing concerns?

Responses to listen for:

- a. If not:
 - i. It could make me the target of ridicule, with peers questioning my masculinity or sexuality, or;
 - ii. It might single me out as not belonging to the group, if those are the attitudes and perspectives the group aligns with, leaving me open to retaliation or ostracism.
- b. If so:
 - i. I know that policies protect those who stand up to misconduct and that my direct supervisor and unit would support me, or;
 - ii. I believe it is important to uphold appropriate standards of conduct, especially regarding treating my peers with respect, no matter the consequences.



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Conclusion

This case study review explored sexual harassment involving the online space and the influence of climate and leadership on actions and outcomes. A positive climate and supportive leadership are crucial for preventing and addressing such behavior. As this case study demonstrates, leadership support is vital for upholding standards and protecting victims. Sexual harassment persists when perpetrators believe their actions are acceptable or that they won't be held accountable.

Leaders must be self-aware and attentive to their team's behavior to foster a culture of responsibility and discourage harmful actions. Addressing sexual harassment through discussions and training increases awareness of appropriate behavior and prevention methods. Ultimately, a safe, valued, and appreciative environment benefits everyone in the organization.



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References

*Note: Each reference below contains pieces of this story. Read through them all to ensure you have the entire picture.

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Handout

1. Imagine you are a Service member who has become aware of the photos shared by the perpetrator. What are some bystander intervention strategies you could use to intervene?
2. What steps or mitigating strategies do you think could help support a better climate or group cohesion in a situation like what is described in the case study?
3. What role did leaders have in this situation, and how could it have been handled better?
4. Do you feel comfortable expressing concerns regarding sexual harassment in your organization? If not, why? If so, what factors help you to feel comfortable expressing concerns?