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Leaders' Perceptions of the Sexual Misconduct Reporting System in the Military

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Walden University
2018

Abstract

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by

Catherine E. Mincey

MA, Webster University, 2011

BS, Columbia University, 2007

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

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Abstract

There is an unwarranted number of men and women that experience an unwanted sexual contact occurrence while on active duty, that is not reported through the military's sexual harassment or sexual assault system channels. Reporting system is cumbersome and ineffective that may hinder a leader's perception in implementing effective sexual harassment and sexual assault policies and procedures. The purpose of this descriptive multiple case study was to explore the ways a reporting system influenced the decision making processes of leaders and the importance of a fluent information flow through communication channels regarding the reporting system for sexual misconduct within an organization. The conceptual framework for the study was comprised of Freire's dialogical pedagogy theory, leadership decision making, and Bandura's social cognitive theory in cultural context. The research questions addressed the perceptions of 10 retired, senior military leaders, regarding how a leaders' decision making processes may be influenced by a reporting system. The data sources included interviews, observations, journaling, and historical documents. The results suggested that leaders' decision making processes were motivated by the following factors: (a) reporting process, (b) leader decision making processes, (c) gender in the workplace setting, (d) reporting deterrent factors, (e) hostile work environments, (f) leader contributions, and (g) social comparisons. The results of this study contribute to positive social change through their potential to be used to deter or eliminate sexual misconduct at the individual, organizational, and societal levels.

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Dedication

To my family, I dedicate this prestigious accomplishment of achieving my doctorate degree. Terence K. Staples, Jr. and Juan J. Mitchell II, my sons, who continue to inspire me to better myself. The both of you have grown into respectful and productive young men and I truly wish the best for you. Always continue to conduct yourselves in a manner that demands respect and displays honor. Thank you for being a sound ear for me during my time in the military and in the doctoral program. I Love You both, more than any words could ever say. Annie L. Mincey, my mommie, who day in and day out gave me a shoulder to cry on and never turned your back on me. Thank you for being the shining example of what a strong mother figure looks like. You were with me throughout my military and doctoral journeys and what a ride. I look forward to our future journey together. You will always be my bestest friend and I Love You. Christopher E. Mincey, my brother, who remains a strong male role model for my boys. Thank you for being there for them when I couldn't, I Love You.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Individuals placed in supervisory positions face numerous obstacles while

carrying out inherent responsibilities, which include leading and mentoring employees,

building cohesive teams, and deterring and processing sexual transgressions. Leadership

is demonstrated by publicly condemning sexual misconduct against men, women, and

advocating for gender equality (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2015). Employees are informed of

the various methods available for reporting an unwanted sexual harassment or assault. Of

all the methods, only a small percentage of victims submit a written complaint (Kvas &

Seljak, 2014). It is the leaders' responsibility to identify the hindrances that impede or

even prevent victims or observers of a sexual misconduct event from reporting.

Sexual harassment and assault are sensitive topics that may cause individuals a

sense of nervousness when discussing or reporting events. Sexual misconduct is

increasingly viewed as one of the most rigorous forms of violence against employees in

the workplace and is a problem in the new global environment compromising the work

force (Yousaf, 2014). Street, Gradus, Giasson, Vogt, and Resick (2013) clarified the

global environment includes deployable areas for military personnel such as Afghanistan

and Iraq. Sexual misconduct adds stress for individuals in an already stressful

atmosphere, such as Afghanistan and Iraq. The participants in my study worked for a

military organization and processed sexual misconduct complaints, while observing and

implementing numerous changes throughout the years. The results from this study may

provide leaders with a deeper understanding of the positive and negative changes to

sexual misconduct regulations to assist in making the reporting system more user friendly.

This chapter will include the background of the study, problem statement, purpose of the study, research question, conceptual framework, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study. A summary will conclude the chapter.

Background of the Study

The military environment encompasses a unique cultural atmosphere. Turchik and Wilson (2010) reported that the culture displayed its own code of conduct, medical system, police, legal system, courts, education, and research facilities. Simultaneously, the culture may permit an environment that fosters sexual violence, a learned ability to objectify other people, obedience to the chain of command, and a belief that individuals external to the military will not understand what occurs in the military (Hoyt, Klosterman Rielage, & Williams, 2011; Turchik & Wilson, 2010). The environment also puts members in close quarters with one another, often in stressful and life-threatening situations.

Men and women devoted to serving their country are engulfed in an environment with a possible dysfunctional operational setting influenced by drugs, alcohol, and being separated from their family members for extended periods of time. When the work day is done, there is often camaraderie which usually involves alcohol at noncommissioned officer and officer's clubs (Cheney et al., 2015). In addition, Eisenberg, Gower,

McMorris, and Bucchianeri (2015) highlighted certain types of biases can be exhibited in hostile environments toward gays, women, and various ethnic groups.

Sexual harassment and sexual assault are differentiated in definition by the act of touching. Firestone, Hackett, and Harris (2012) defined sexual harassment as unwelcome and unsolicited attention in the form of letters; calls; sexually provocative looks, gestures, and/or body language; and calls, hoots, and/or yells of a sexual nature. Sexual assault is described as the physical contact occurring from touching, such as rape (Firestone et al., 2012). Grossman (2015) defined sexual discrimination as an employer's advantage to dominate a subordinate employee using sexually discriminatory practices. Sexual harassment is recognized as a form of sexual discrimination (Harris & Firestone, 2010); unfortunately, the military's sexual harassment policy does not convey suspected sexual discrimination incidents in the annual sexual harassment and assault report; therefore, sexual discrimination was not addressed as a part of this study.

Numerous studies, both qualitative and quantitative, have been conducted concerning sexual harassment and sexual assault in the military (Gallegos, Cross, & Pigeon, 2015). For decades research and prevention laws in over 31 countries have provided evidence of the pervasive and damaging health, career, and organizational consequences of workplace sexual harassment in private and public-sector universities (Fusilier & Penrod, 2015). However, there is a gap in the scientific knowledge pertaining to the reporting process (Gallegos et al., 2015) and the investigation and processing of the violent sex crimes against victims (Vidu, Puigvert, Joanpere, Valls, & Melgar, 2017). My rationale for conducting this descriptive multiple case study of the military's sexual

harassment and sexual assault policies and reporting system was to explore the ways a reporting system influenced the decision making processes of leaders and the importance of a fluent information flow through communication channels regarding the reporting system for sexual misconduct within an organization. The results of this study may be important for organizational leaders to understand the possible outcomes for victims who experience a sexual harassment or assault encounter (see Kelty, Kleykamp, & Segal, 2010). Williams and Bernstein (2011) found that military units foster an environment in which incidents occurring in the unit remain in the unit, subsequently creating an atmosphere where victims feel obligated not to report sexual misconduct events.

Victims who have chosen to follow an organization's unwritten code not to report their unwanted sexual encounter are vulnerable to developing health and mental disorders (see Hoyt et al., 2011; Kimerling, Pavao, & Wong, 2016; LeardMann et al., 2013; Schmid, 2010). Jordan, Campbell, and Follingstad (2010) revealed that mental disorders can occur because of stalking, rape, and psychological aggression incidents. Victims often choose to discuss sexual misconduct situations only after leaving the military environment (Mattocks et al., 2012). Leaders must become more proactive within their units to identify and eliminate conditions where sexual misconduct issues may happen, while creating an environment where victims feel at ease to report a sexual misconduct event.

Problem Statement

Sexual misconduct remains one of the most underreported crimes in society (McLaughlin, Uggen, & Blackstone, 2017) and carries over into the military as a constant

concern for military leaders (Stander & Thomsen, 2016). Employees are less likely to report sexual misconduct occurrences without the presence of thoroughly descriptive reporting systems (Tseng, 2014). The general problem under study was that a cumbersome, ineffective reporting system may hinder a leader's perception in implementing effective sexual harassment and assault policies and procedures. The specific problem under study was determining the effect that a lack of an effective reporting system may have on leaders' decision making processes in the aftermath of a sexual misconduct event. Identifying the specific influences that a reporting system has within the military from the perceptions of leaders may provide organizational leaders with the essential feedback necessary for increasing their awareness of how to create and implement policies, procedures, and reporting systems that can positively contribute to the successful reduction or elimination of sexual misconduct events. How leaders' decision making processes are influenced by a reporting system is unknown; correspondingly, there is a gap in the literature since reporting processes accounts for only 34% of the literature (Gallegos et al., 2015) and investigation and processing of the violent sexual crimes against victims are also under-investigated (Vidu et al., 2017).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive, multiple case study was to explore the ways a reporting system influenced the decision making processes of leaders and the importance of a fluent information flow through communication channels regarding the reporting system for sexual misconduct within an organization. The results of this study may provide information about the sexual misconduct reporting system, decision making

processes of leaders in the military, and flow of communication since previous scholars and practitioners have not focused on the ways a reporting system may influence leaders' decision making processes. I explored the decision making processes of leaders to understand how diverse conclusions may be arrived at following a reported sexual misconduct event.

Exploring the influences of a reporting system on leaders' decision making processes and the importance of an effective information flow through communication channels regarding the reporting system for sexual misconduct may enhance the understanding of leaders concerning the importance of developing and implementing successful sexual harassment and assault procedures with an aligned reporting system and flow of communication within an organization to create a cohesive workplace environment that encourages victims to report sexual misconduct transgressions. Building a cohesive work environment contributes to increasing an organization's overall productivity.

Research Questions

Bloomberg and Volpe (2015) opined that the use of research questions that encompass the entire research design is critical for a study. The research questions that I developed to guide this study were:

Research Question 1: In what ways does the military's reporting system influence leaders' decision making processes?

Research Question 2: How important is it for leaders to develop and implement an effective flow of information through communication channels regarding the reporting system for sexual misconduct in an organization?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this qualitative study provided me with a foundation for understanding why decision making and communication are essential tools when developing effective reporting systems that align with sexual harassment and assault policies and procedures. Leaders use decision making skills to maintain order and enforce the duties of others (Lowe & Gabard, 2014), and understanding how to develop an appropriate decision is essential to the implementation of the best course of action (Ejimabo, 2015); whereas, communication improves interpersonal relationships (Katz, Cojucar, Douglas, & Huffman, 2014). An inadequate reporting system can have a substantial negative influence within an organization; employers are obligated to prevent sexual harassment by creating no-harassment policies, including training, reporting, and investigations, while employees assume the responsibility of preventing and reporting sexual harassment (Campbell et al., 2013).

Decision making and communication were the basis of the conceptual framework that I used in this study, which was comprised of Freire's (1970) dialogical pedagogy theory, the theory of leadership decision making, and Bandura's (2002) social cognitive theory in cultural context. Freire's dialogical pedagogy theory, leadership decision making, and Bandura's social cognitive theory in cultural context converge through the process of empowerment. Freire highlighted the importance of empowering

communication within an organizational environment at every level. In the theory of leadership decision making, Ejimabo (2015) shared the importance of leaders making proper decisions. Bandura stressed that collective efficacy empowers groups in incorporating shared beliefs to produce desired effects through collective interactions.

Nature of the Study

The qualitative method was suitable for this study because it is used to ascertain the meaning of the topic and an individual's personal experiences concerning the subject (see Slife & Melling, 2012). Qualitative research has been used to create theories, uncover new phenomena, find relationships between various situations, and provide a profound understanding of contextual influences pertaining to organizational changes (Garcia & Gluesing, 2013). My rationale for conducting a descriptive multiple case study of the military's sexual harassment and sexual assault policies and reporting system was to explore the ways a reporting system influenced the decision making processes of leaders and the importance of a fluent information flow through communication channels regarding the reporting system for sexual misconduct within an organization. I explored the decision making processes of leaders to understand how diverse resolutions may be arrived at following a reported sexual misconduct event. The results from this study may provide leaders with a deeper understanding of the necessary changes that need to be made to the sexual misconduct reporting system to influence victims to report and improve the processing of complaints.

For this qualitative, multiple, case study, I used semistructured interviews; observations of the participants; and historical documents including policies, procedures,

regulations, and published sexual harassment and assault statistical reports to gather data for analysis. Semistructured interviews are open ended and provide interviewees with an opportunity to express their views using rich, spontaneous descriptions during the interview process (Blandisi, Clow, & Ricciardelli, 2015). I interviewed 10 retired, military leaders who had served in a senior leadership position of a military organization and had processed sexual misconduct complaints. The participants were interviewed concerning their perceptions of numerous sexual misconduct events, and their responses were described in detail and explored in this study.

The participants of the study were not identified through a particular organization or various industry but had to meet the established criteria to qualify for participation in the study, which included being a retired, senior military leader in the position for over 5 years who had processed a sexual misconduct complaint. I identified the participants through the professional network website, LinkedIn. Ten participants who met the criteria were selected through purposeful sampling. I invited the selected participants to participate in the study by sending them an informed consent form. The participants were interviewed in-person or through Skype or FaceTime, using the interview guide (see Appendix B). Using descriptive coding, their responses were coded individually in NVivo software to identify patterns and themes initially. Subsequently, I cross-case analyzed the individual coding to identify any additional patterns and themes. Descriptive coding assigns labels to the data collected to summarize in a word or short phrase that is used in the NVivo software (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

Definitions

Camaraderie: Support networks comprised of unit or societal environments to foster a sense of closeness (Cheney et al., 2015).

Decision making: A process that assists the commander and staff in developing estimates and a plan; leaders explore a situation and reach logical decisions (Department of the Army, 1997).

Fiscal year: An operational year for federal government organizations run from October to September (Department of Defense, 2014b).

Military culture: A culture different than the culture found in most of the civilian world because the military has its own code of conduct, legal system, police, courts, education, and research facilities, and medical system. The military culture has its own set of norms and values that promote strong obedience to the chain of command and encourage protection of the military and the belief that those outside the military will not understand what goes on within the military (Patrie, 2015).

Military leaders: Leaders who process sexual harassment and assault complaints and are officers in the rank of O1-O10 and enlisted soldiers from E5-E9, senior leaders are officers in the rank of O4-O10 and enlisted soldiers from E7-E9 (Holland, Rabelo, & Cortina, 2014).

Reporting system: A way for soldiers to report a sexual misconduct event to specified individuals to hold those who commit these crimes accountable. For the purposes of this policy, the soldier is allowed access to medical care, counseling, and

victim advocacy with the option to initiate or not initiate the investigative process. (Department of the Army, 2014).

Assumptions

I made several assumptions for this study. My first assumption was the that participants would be opposed to discussing sexual harassment and assault activities. Another assumption concerning the participants was that the responses supplied during the interviews would be truthful. The higher the rank of an accused, the higher the chance a conflict could result with a leader helping a victim report a sexual misconduct event (Tseng, 2014). The sexual misconduct event a participant previously processed, if against a higher ranking accused, could provoke inaccurate responses during the interview process. I informed the participants of the purpose of the study to solicit factual responses from them to generate accurate results. Notifying the participants of the purpose of the study eases each participant's conscience to encourage truthful responses (McDermid, Peters, Jackson, & Daly, 2014). Participants of a survey may skew their responses if organizational supervisors receive the raw data and unfiltered results of the study (Bierema, 2016). An additional assumption concerning the participants was their opposition to sexual misconduct occurrences. The final assumption I made was that the results of the study may be useful for leaders of any industry to assist in the deterrence and elimination of sexually-disruptive organizational environments. Workplace settings free of hostility provide leaders and employees with an opportunity to increase productivity and strengthen internal cohesion.

Scope and Delimitations

In this study, I explored the perceptions of leaders to understand the ways a reporting system influenced their decision making processes and the importance of the flow of communication within an organization. Military leaders were the only participants in this study since they were governed by the same sexual harassment and assault policies and reporting system, regardless of duty position or assignment location. The inclusion criteria were based on the perceptions of how military leaders operate while dealing with the reporting system implemented within an organization. The study involved 10 purposefully-selected leaders who processed sexual misconduct complaints during their military career and represented only 3% of the total leaders of the whole Army (Department of Defense, 2014b). One delimitation for the study was the diverse perceptions of leaders of the military's sexual harassment and assault policy and the processing of reported sexual misconduct events may have occurred because of each participant's understanding of each component.

Limitations

I identified several limitations for this study. A participants' description of a processed sexual misconduct occurrence was the main limitation because the reluctance to discuss the event in a study outside of the military environment is a possibility (Jordan et al., 2010). An additional limitation was the fact that no information was collected on the offenders of sexual complaints to explore whether any punishments were imposed to provide the victims with confidence in the system (LeardMann et al., 2013).

The next limitation identified concerned the transferability of the sample size due to the leaders in the study represented only 3% of the total number of leaders of the whole Army. Thick and detailed descriptions addressed the transferability issues, so the assessment of contextual similarities could occur (see Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013; Malagon-Maldonado, 2014). Marshall and Rossman (2016) revealed that processing the transferability was the responsibility of the reader. The responses provided by participants may have been biased concerning the sexual misconduct complaints they processed due to the personal or professional relationship they had with the victim or offender. I looked for these biases during the interview process and addressed them in the findings.

The final limitation I identified pertained to my use of a professional networking website, LinkedIn, to recruit participants. The qualifications of the participants could not be verified, and the participants were trusted that they met the criteria to participate in the study. Worrell, Wasko, and Johnston (2013) reported that social networks provided a new approach in the exploration of organizational or professional qualifiers. Identifying an individual's expertise within and outside traditional hierarchies and organizational structures could be advertised using social networking (Worrell et al., 2013). Any limitation that I identified during the study was addressed in the findings to inform leaders where the occurrence of the limitation was discovered.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study have value to the field of management in helping to fill a gap in understanding how a reporting system influenced the decision making processes of

leaders and the importance of information flow through communication channels regarding the reporting system for sexual misconduct within an organization. Previous studies have been conducted concerning sexual harassment and sexual assault in the military (Gallegos et al., 2015); however, a gap still existed in scientific knowledge pertaining to the reporting process (Gallegos et al., 2015) and the investigation and processing of violent crimes against victims (Vidu et al., 2017). In the past decade, an increasing concern has been evident among political and military leaders and the American public regarding incidences of sexual harassment and assault in the military (Stander & Thomsen, 2016). Madkins, Crocker, and Kahla (2015) emphasized that sexual harassment could have a negative influence on everyone in a work environment if not handled properly. Recommendations have been made to numerous organizational leaders, including those from the military and public and private sectors, to develop and incorporate countermeasures designed to deter and eliminate the issue of sexual misconduct behavior (see Ross, 2013; Whitaker, Murphy, Eckhardt, Hodges, & Cowart, 2013). One of the first steps was to implement a user-friendly reporting system.

The Department of Defense (2013) experienced a 33% increase in reported sexual misconduct occurrences; however, a survey conducted in 2013 revealed 6.1% of women and 1.2% of men experienced an unwanted sexual contact occurrence while on active duty that was not reported through the military's sexual harassment or assault system (Burgess, Lee, & Carretta, 2016). Leaders must determine whether the reporting system was a factor deterring victims from reporting a sexually-motivated event. The results of this study may significantly contribute to social change by providing leaders with

strategic options for ensuring policies, procedures, training, reporting systems, or support channels designed to address negative sexual encounters are appropriately updated and improved upon to provide the needed results. Implementing these positive strategies may prevent sexual misconduct in the workplace, providing victims with a recourse to feel some sense of wholeness again. A successful recourse may be a long-term deterrent when all employees at every level understand sexual misconduct will not be tolerated within the organization, and the process to report it is user-friendly and ensures confidentiality and safety of the victim.

Significance to Practice

Numerous studies have been conducted pertaining to sexual harassment and assault policies and procedures in different settings, while only limited studies exist concerning the reporting systems used to process victim complaints. Victims may be reluctant to report attacks for fear of not being believed or the possibility of a negative impact on a service member's career (Santaularia et al., 2014). Policy should mandate the reporting of sexual harassment and sexual assault by any individual who witnesses sexual misconduct behaviors (Castro, Kintzle, Schuyler, Lucas, & Warner, 2015). Every employee has a responsibility to report observed sexual transgressions occurring within an organization.

The results of this study provide leaders with a detailed description of how a cumbersome, ineffective reporting system may hinder their perceptions and decision making processes of sexual harassment and assault policies and procedures. The findings may assist future leaders in various organizational settings. The results may be especially

beneficial for military leaders since the reporting system is governed by the sexual

harassment and assault regulation.

Significance to Theory

The cultural environment an organization operates with may influence the

decision making practices of military leaders. Culture is the set of values, beliefs,

principles, and attitudes shared within a group of people and a shared culture conditions

individual behavior (Carrasco, Francoeur, Labelle, Laffarga, & Ruiz-Barbadillo, 2015).

Breger (2014) disclosed that a rape culture exists in the U.S. military and women face a

higher risk of being raped multiple times there. Leaders must understand effective

leadership is required to process sexual harassment and assault complaints by excluding

cultural biases in their decision making processes.

Sexual harassment and assault have a negative effect in any environment the

behavior exists in. The negative impact of sexual misconduct in the workplace extends

beyond the victim (Van De Griend & Messias, 2014). In addition, a sexually-motivated

experience can have numerous negative ramifications to include both immediate and

lasting physical, psychological, and social problems (Davidson, Lozano, Cole, & Gervais,

2013). The possible negative outcomes of sexual harassment and assault events can

greatly affect an organization's operational atmosphere.

Significance to Social Change

Daily workplace atmospheres may cause certain social norms, whether positive or

negative, to develop and become a constant occurrence. Organizational leaders identify

approaches with the potential of transforming relations, social norms, and systems that

could sustain gender inequality and sexual violence, such as changes in community norms concerning masculinity (Jewkes, Flood, & Lang, 2015). Additionally, alterations in attitudes and beliefs are common targets of prevention efforts and large-scale social change addressed at the individual and group level (Whitaker et al., 2013). Conducting training seminars or conferences is a practice used by some leaders to distribute updated information; use of this practice by military leaders could possibly initiate a positive social change.

The organizational culture plays a role in the swiftness of the spread of relevant information within it. Digital technologies (i.e., Internet or mobile phones) are currently used to circulate information and develop social networking and instant messaging services into social practices (Livingstone & Gorzig, 2014). Implementing additional methods to circulate information (i.e., posters or billboards) could assist leaders in reaching a broader audience.

Prevention programs must be created that motivate individuals to change socially-accepted sexual behaviors. Sexual misconduct prevention programs, known as primary prevention, aim to create a positive social change (Wall, 2013). The organizational culture must provide leaders with the flexibility to develop policies, procedures, and reporting systems designed to change socially negative sexual misconduct events.

Summary and Transition

A cumbersome, ineffective reporting system may hinder a leader's ability to implement effective sexual harassment and assault policies and procedures, which crucially influence their decision making process in the aftermath of a sexual misconduct

event. The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive, multiple case study was to explore the ways a reporting system influenced the decision making processes of leaders and the importance of a fluent information flow through communication channels regarding the reporting system for sexual misconduct within an organization. The results of the study may provide leaders with a detailed description of the ways a reporting system may hinder or aid leaders' perceptions and decision making processes of sexual harassment and assault policies and procedures and the importance of developing an efficient communication practice regarding the reporting system within an organization. When organizations strive to operate in a positive manner, the outcome often promotes a positive societal environment.

In Chapter 2, I will conduct a review of the literature on sexual harassment and assault reporting systems and its effect on the decision making processes of leaders, the decision making and communication frameworks, and the military culture concerning sexual misconduct.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The specific problem under study was determining the effect that a lack of an effective reporting system may have on leaders' decision making processes in the aftermath of a sexual misconduct event. Identifying the specific influences of a reporting system within the military from the perceptions of leaders may provide organizational leaders with the essential feedback necessary to increase their awareness of how to create and implement policies, procedures, and reporting systems that can positively contribute to the successful reduction or elimination of sexual misconduct events. The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive, multiple case study was to explore the ways a reporting system influenced the decision making processes of leaders and the importance of a fluent information flow through communication channels regarding the reporting system for sexual misconduct within an organization.

I explored the relevance of how a leaders' decision making processes may be influenced by the reporting system accompanying a sexual misconduct program using the current literature. Numerous studies have been conducted concerning sexual harassment and sexual assault; however, my search of the literature revealed studies on reporting systems account for only 39% of them (678 peer-reviewed journal articles searched for the term *reporting system for sexual harassment and sexual assault* / 1,744 peer-reviewed journal articles searched for the terms *sexual harassment* and *sexual assault*). A national survey of active duty military personnel found 4.4% of women and 0.9% of men experienced unwanted sexual contact within a year of the survey (LeardMann et al.,

2013). Van De Griend and Messias (2014) discovered labor and social policies may impact whether victims report sexual misconduct incidents.

In this chapter, I will provide research that I used to identify the gap in the literature concerning the military's sexual misconduct reporting system and leaders' decision making processes of the reporting system. The conceptual framework for the study was comprised of Freire's (1970) dialogical pedagogy theory; the theory of leadership decision making; Bandura's (2002) social cognitive theory in cultural context; and the current and historical literature on sexual harassment, sexual assault, military culture, leadership, and communication.

Literature Search Strategy

I used several library databases and search engines to gather information for this literature review, including those accessible through the Walden University Library, local resources, the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, professional associations related to sexual harassment and sexual assault, and various academic and topic databases. The specific academic and topic databases that were searched were Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, Dissertation and Theses, ebrary, EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, ProQuest Central, Sage Journals, SocINDEX with Full Text, and Thoreau Multi-Database Search. I used several keyword terms as well as combinations of the terms to search these resources, including *sexual harassment, sexual assault, decision making, communication, military culture, organizational culture, social change, positive social change, leadership, military leadership, sexual harassment reporting system, sexual assault reporting system, sexual harassment policies, sexual*

assault procedures, qualitative method, multiple case study design, successful reporting systems, unsuccessful reporting systems, information, information sharing, conceptual framework, Freire, Freire's dialogical pedagogy theory, leadership decision making, and Bandura's social cognitive theory in cultural context, effect of sexual misconduct in the workplace, reported sexual misconduct, unreported sexual misconduct, preventing sexual harassment, victimization, coping behaviors, ethical leadership, ethnic differences concerning sexual misconduct, managing sexual misconduct in the workplace, sexual violations, sexual violence, defining sexual harassment, defining sexual assault, and effects of delayed reporting.

I limited my resource search to peer-reviewed journals, journal articles, books, and periodicals that had been published within the last 5 years old. My search of the terms *sexual harassment* and *sexual assault* published between 2013 and 2017 resulted in 1,744 peer-reviewed journal articles, and a search of the term *reporting system for sexual harassment and sexual assault* during the same time period resulted in 678 peer-reviewed journal articles. In these two searches I identified a gap in the literature that I aimed to fill with this study. A search of the terms *sexual harassment, sexual assault, reporting system, leadership, communication, culture, policies and procedures, decision making*, and *social change* published between 2013 and 2017 and earlier than 2012 resulted in the selected literature shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Literature Review Sources

Source	Literature review sources 2013 and later	Literature review sources 2012 and earlier	Total
Non-peer-reviewed books and articles	33	5	38
Dissertations and legislation	5	1	6
Peer-reviewed articles	76	19	94
Total	114	25	139

Conceptual Framework

The central concept of this study involved understanding decision making, leadership decision making, and communication as essential tools when developing effective reporting systems that align with sexual harassment, sexual assault, reporting systems, policies, and procedures. The conceptual framework was embodied by three theories: Freire's dialogical pedagogy theory, the theory of leadership decision making, and Bandura's social cognitive theory in cultural context. The theories have been previously used by scholars and practitioners to understand how leaders employ decision making skills to supervise employees effectively (Lowe & Gabard, 2014) and use communication to build better interpersonal relationships within an organization (Katz et al., 2014). Two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision making promotes a conducive environment for personal actions and interpersonal relationships (Hassan,

Wright, & Yukl, 2014). My use of Freire's dialogical pedagogy theory, the theory of

leadership decision making, and Bandura's social cognitive theory in cultural context

benefitted this study by addressing the importance of leaders implementing an effective

decision making and communication approach. Each theory was used to address the

research questions and provided a foundation for this study.

Freire's Dialogical Pedagogy Theory

Decision making is a fundamental skill that leaders need to manage an

organization in a successful manner and is a tool that assists the commander and staff in

developing estimates and a plan; leaders explore a situation and reach logical decisions

(Department of the Army, 1997). Freire (1970) discovered alienating human beings from

their own decision making causes a person to lose objectivity. Participating in the

decision making process provides leaders with the freedom, strength, courage, and

support to deal with unwanted acts in a better way (Younas & Rattani, 2014). Restricting

a leader's opportunity to make rational decisions can negatively affect how leaders are

perceived by employees and peers (Stockman, Lucea, & Campbell, 2013).

Policies and procedures outline how reported or unreported sexual misconduct

incidents should be processed to guide leaders. Processing reported sexual harassment

and assault situations requires skill and judgment (Rich & Seffrin, 2013). Leaders must

take numerous factors into consideration when determining how to proceed when a

possible sexual misconduct event occurs to include the victim, alleged perpetrator,

reporting system policies and procedures, unit morale, and possible affect the outcome

may have on the organization (Alderden & Ullman, 2012). Making decisions on sexual

harassment and assault complaints requires the serious consideration and analysis of the individuals responsible for deciding the outcomes.

Leadership Decision Making

The theory of leadership decision making further expands on Freire's dialogical pedagogy theory. Understanding how decisions are made helps individuals in leadership positions make better decisions (Heller, 1992). Leadership is not only considered the position, power, or authority of an individual or group, but the strategic, systemic, productive, and positive qualities a leader develops to exhibit influential and goal-oriented characteristics to subordinates (Ejimabo, 2015). A leader earning the confidence of employees strengthens the bond within an organization (Stockman et al., 2013).

The investment of time and effort, on a supervisor's part, may be an essential tool for leadership personnel to assist in making better decisions. When leaders employ leadership decision making skills, the decisions lead to the commitment of resources, significantly impacting the long-term performance of an organization (Ejimabo, 2015). Effective leaders develop a leadership decision making process in which they implement critical thinking skills to improve decisions while maintaining the confidence of every stakeholder (Ejimabo, 2015). Increasing the performance of an organization requires the use of leaders' cognitive skills.

The workplace environment should provide employees with a conducive setting for contributing positive input. Leaders create a participative atmosphere when subordinate employees are involved in the decision making process (Ejimabo, 2015). The participative practice bolsters the attitudes of the individuals ultimately executing the

decisions (Heller, 1992). The inclusion of employees in the decision making process also encourages information sharing (Ejimabo, 2015). Information sharing is established by creating a fluent communication practice (Hassan, Wright, & Yukl, 2014).

Effective communication channels and the inclusion of input from subordinate employees produces an atmosphere of improved cognitive understanding of issues and perspectives leading to better decision making in the workplace (Hoandrǎ, 2017). When leaders blend the feedback provided from subordinate employees and other leaders, they form reflective, strategic, decision making processes, resulting in enlightened judgments and effectual actions (Kolodinsky & Bierly, 2013). Ineffective communication can have an opposite effect in a workplace setting.

Leaders must explore a situation and determine the potential outcomes, successes or failures, that may ensue from a specific decision. One instance when senior leaders can fail to make effective decisions occurs when their focus is set on maximizing short-term goals without considering the long-term effect on organizational stakeholders (Kolodinsky & Bierly, 2013). A counter-approach to this instance is for senior leaders to consider incorporating the expertise and experience that subordinate employees possess to enhance decisions and the monitoring capabilities of resources across diverse work disciplines (Kazemi & Alavi, 2017). Various decision making processes are available for leaders.

Competent leaders thoroughly explore and implement pragmatic decision making processes in an organization. The competitive strategy of an organization is enhanced when suitable decision making structures are selected for use that aid in surpassing a rival

company's operation (Oyewobi, Windapo, & Rotimi, 2016). Decisions can be made using an analytical, intuitional, or emotional process (Kolodinsky & Bierly, 2013). Each approach offers distinctive advantages or disadvantages.

The selection of an appropriate decision approach for specific circumstances is important. Analytical processes include rational decisions that extensively explore a conflict to determine the best technique to achieve a successful outcome (Kolodinsky & Bierly, 2013). Intuition draws on the experience, training, and prior learning of a leader to produce rapid solutions (Kolodinsky & Bierly, 2013). While emotional decisions are considered to be irrational, since they are based on an individual's feelings and often include biased discernment (Kolodinsky & Bierly, 2013). Eliminating personal biases from organizational decisions are an important responsibility for leaders (Mattocks et al., 2012).

The knowledge a leader gains throughout a career is helpful for making wise decisions. Explicit knowledge is valuable recallable information a leader uses to formulate logical decisions and justifiable actions (Kolodinsky & Bierly, 2013). Whereas, tacit knowledge, also known as gut feelings or intuition, is derived from an individual's subconscious and nonrecallable thoughts developed over time and through life experiences to make fast decisions (Kolodinsky & Bierly, 2013). Leaders with the ability to blend explicit and tacit knowledge develop cognitive complexity, which is the capacity to adapt, think, understand, and make decisions about complex phenomena in organizational settings (Kolodinsky & Bierly, 2013). Leaders inherit the responsibility of

ensuring that information properly flows throughout an organization, and appropriate decisions are made to safeguard employees from sexually hostile environments.

Leaders must determine the leadership technique that is suitable for their particular workplace environment. Functional leaders work at improving communication, coordination, decision making, building trust, resolving conflict, ensure resources are properly distributed, and handle issues that arise in a timely manner (Kazemi & Alavi, 2017). Leaders assimilate complex ideas, systems, problems, situations, interactions, and relationships (Niemandt, 2015). As leaders develop, incorporating any of the above skills assist in making better decisions.

Effective decision making may be accomplished using team configurations. Teams operate in diverse levels including local, global, and contextual dynamics (Hoandră, 2017). In the contextual dynamic, teams are motivated by leaders to achieve a desired outcome by selecting adaptable strategies for problem-solving, dealing with unpredictable situations, learning and improving work processes, and handling stressful situations (Hoandră, 2017). Decisions made using team structures reach the maximum effectiveness by relying on the essential interpersonal interactions between team members (Hoandră, 2017). Properly developed individuals bring diverse skills to team edifices that strengthen the informational flow and decision making processes experienced within an organization. I conducted an examination of how leadership decision making is perceived in the field of management.

Diverse decision making options are available for leaders. Decision making styles include five different groups: rational, intuitive, dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous (Oyewobi et al., 2016). Leaders employing rational decision making anticipate the need for a decision and are copiously equipped with the required information suitable to make an efficacious decision (Oyewobi et al., 2016). Whereas, intuitive decisions are made based on a leader's premonitions and feelings affording optimal decisions (Oyewobi et al., 2016). Dependent decisions are made when leaders rely on the support and feedback provided by subordinate workers (Oyewobi et al., 2016). Leaders fearing the possibility of failure use avoidant decisions and spontaneous decision makers develop sudden and impulsive decisions (Oyewobi et al., 2016). Leaders could negatively affect their reputation when they use an inappropriate decision making technique (Oyewobi et al., 2016).

Several operational factors have been identified that influence decision making. Organizational industries and interpersonal relationships contribute substantially to the organizational behavior and decision making processes of leaders (Oyewobi et al., 2016). Additionally, Oyewobi et al. (2016) stressed decision makers are influenced by an unpredictable economy that affect the decisions of everyday decisions. Leadership decision making is an ever-changing concept.

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory in Cultural Context

Communication is a key function in the day-to-day and long-term operations of an organization. Communication is the exchange of information between two or more individuals (Barak, Braverman, Chen, & Rao, 2013). Furthermore, corporate

communication is an application in the world of management useful for managers at all

levels to understand what effective communication can do for an organization and how

productive conditions can be created through communication (Cornelissen &

Cornelissen, 2017). Leaders must select the communication approach, or combination,

which best supports the flow of information throughout the organization (Barak et al.,

2013).

Careful consideration of a communication method is required by leaders to ensure

information smoothly flows throughout an organization. Information can be affected by

the delivery method used (Bandura, 1986). The selection of a satisfactory communication

technique encourages open and honest communication (Yukl, 2013); while also

providing victims or complainants with a safe atmosphere to report a sexual misconduct

event and protection from repercussions (Ross, 2013). Numerous communication

methods are available for organizational structures to distribute and receive information

including two-way or technological techniques.

Two-way communication occurs during numerous occasions. Direct

communication occurs during face-to-face or confrontational situations and may not

always be the best means and methods of communication (Ross, 2013). Two-way

communication occurs through cultural exchanges; while societies influence each other

through communication by words or images, military conquests, and colonizing

expeditions (Bandura, 2002). The direct communication of information is ideal within an

organization but the technological method offers diverse possibilities.

The use of computers is an example of technological communication. Communication using technological means reconstruct institutional practices and the flow of information (Bandura, 1986). The advancement of technological communication has rekindled vigorous debates concerning transcultural power and cultural protectionism (Bandura, 1986). Organizations implement measures to protect the exchange of information between employees.

Freire's (1970) dialogical pedagogy theory establishes the foundation of the data used as key themes, modes, and the expectations of leaders' decision making skills. Leadership decision making assists leaders in understanding the importance of making the appropriate decisions. Bandura's (2002) social cognitive theory within a cultural context acts as a framework for exploring the behaviors and fundamental affects or motives for a leader's actions concerning the communication of collected data. The concepts have been applied previously to individual situations. Examining the concepts together in this study benefits leaders by explaining why the development of individual and leadership decision making skills are important; while also illuminating the significance of the swift and steady flow of communication. During the literature review, I explored the current literature for themes associated with the key concepts of the study.

Literature Review

The purpose of the literature review was to establish a foundation and corroboration for the research questions:

In what ways does the military's reporting system influence leaders' decision making processes?

How important is it for leaders to develop and implement an effective flow of information through communication channels regarding the reporting system for sexual misconduct in an organization?

The literature review is divided into three sections: review of the methodologies, literature pertaining to the research questions, and explored themes from the literature review.

Review of the Methodologies

I conducted the literature review and selected 139 studies for examination using the criteria described in Table 1. Empirical quantitative or mixed-method studies provide statistical results; whereas, qualitative studies provide in-depth information for discussing coerced or forced sexual acts (Stockman et al., 2013). Scholarly products, such as peer-reviewed journal articles, are often generated in lieu of final technical reports of sexual misconduct incidents (Fox & Shjarback, 2016). The primary data sources for the selected studies consisted of surveyed data from large samples, secondary data reviews, and reviews of historical documents.

I used the qualitative method to explore the influences, procedures, and decisions to answer the research questions offered an outstanding method for gathering data for the topic of interest than the methods used in previous studies. I used the multiple case study approach to understand the possible outcomes for victims who experienced a sexual harassment or assault encounter (Kelty et al., 2010). I collected data for this study by using semistructured interviews, observations of the participants, and historical documents as my additional source of data such as policies, procedures, regulations, and

published sexual harassment and assault statistical reports sexual harassment, sexual assault, and reporting systems.

Recent quantitative studies revealed important data concerning the reporting of sexual misconduct incidents in the military. Numerous circumstances discouraged military victims from reporting sexual harassment or sexual assault events to include bunking in crowded conditions or working in units that tolerated sexual misconduct in peacetime, during deployments, or in combat (Murdoch et al., 2014). The quantitative literature review revealed individuals who reported being sexually harassed or assaulted after leaving the military during Gulf War I were younger participants and twice as likely to say they were unemployed or disabled (Murdoch et al., 2014). Victims often decided not to report a sexual misconduct incident or identify the perpetrator (Street et al., 2015). Although the quantitative inquiries provided essential statistical data, the in-depth examination of leaders' perceptions regarding the influences of the reporting system would have been overlooked in this study. The qualitative approach allowed me to conduct a thorough examination of participants' insights.

I selected 33 qualitative studies for this study consisting of 6 case studies. The selected studies used various data sources including interviews, observations, and historical documents. The studies compared the findings to the results presented in other qualitative research methods. The previous researchers were careful to select the best method and design to develop the scholarly product.

Alternative qualitative designs assisted previous researchers in the development of informative studies. Contrary to the case study design, content analysis was employed.

Peled-Laskov and Gimshi (2014) used content analysis to explore the responses provided by participants, convicted criminals, who self-reported the offense they were accused of committing. Richards, Crittenden, Garland, and McGuffee (2014) used the content analysis design to describe how 31 out of 55 universities sampled did not have reporting requirements included in their sexual harassment and sexual assault policies.

Scholars and practitioners have used different combinations of data collection techniques to gather data. Alderden and Ullman (2012) utilized paper files, electronic files, and supplemental reports to ascertain the resistance and willingness of a victim to report a sexual misconduct event in association with the likelihood of an arrest (Alderden & Ullman, 2012). Lowe and Gabard (2014) incorporated surveys and focus groups to discover the most common reason victims did not report an incident and found it was because they felt their position was low in the organizational structure or the incident was not recognized as an issue. Next, I examine the literature pertaining to the research questions.

Literature Pertaining to the Research Questions

The section contains 6 subsections: sexual harassment in the military, sexual assault in the military, military reporting system, leadership involvement and decision making processes, military culture concerning sexual misconduct, and social implications. A survey conducted with 666 participants yielded that 18% were sexually harassed and 19% were sexually assaulted and not satisfied by the outcome that occurred from reporting their event (Clancy, Nelson, Rutherford, & Hinde, 2014). Victims may experience negative consequences after reporting a sexual misconduct incident, such as

increased doubts of the complaint by outsiders contributing to victims receiving the

blame (Balogh, Kite, Pickel, Canel, & Schroeder, 2003). Any negative reaction can

discourage victims from reporting an offense including retaliation by the harasser

(Balogh et al., 2003). First, I explore sexual harassment in the military.

Sexual Harassment in the Military

Every civilian joining the military with the intentions of becoming a soldier are

immediately informed of the sexual harassment policies, procedures, and reporting

system. As of 2015, sexual harassment in the military is defined as:

> A form of sex discrimination that involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests
> for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:
>
> - Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or
>   condition of a person's job, pay, or career, or
>
> - 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 or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive
>   working environment (Department of Defense, 2016b, p. 4).

The Supreme Court's definition of sexual harassment includes additional offenses such as

sexually colored remarks, showing pornography, or verbal or nonverbal conduct of a

sexual nature (Pathak, 2015; Pattison, Sanders, & Ross, 2014). A sound definition of

sexual harassment is important for leaders to build a rapport with employees to assist in

reporting sexually motivated incidents.

The sexual harassment definition applies to every military organization regardless

of location within the United States or overseas. Training is an option used to disperse the

information and changes to the sexual harassment policies, procedures, and reporting

system. The sensitivity and accuracy leaders display during sexual harassment training increases the circulation of the policies and procedures throughout an organization (Buckner, Hindman, Huelsman, & Bergman, 2014). In the health care sector, a constant issue facing researchers are the various and often interchangeable definitions of workplace violence (Boyle & Wallis, 2016). Industries outside of the military strive to unite in developing a universal definition of sexual harassment.

Comparing sexual harassment policies in similar settings may identify possible issues. Reese and Lindenberg (2004) found after 177 cities in Michigan were surveyed, numerous issues were identified with sexual harassment policies including 29% of the policies did not address how supervisors would handle complaints, only 14% included time frames for processing complaints, 3% included sanctions for retaliation, and one policy specified the composition of the investigative team. Retaliation is often regarded as a response to injustice and nonsexual forms of perpetrator aggression (Bernick, 2014; Morganson & Major, 2014). I explored the perceptions of sexual harassment in the workplace for this study.

Several discernments exist concerning sexual harassment in the workplace. Herrera, Herrera, and Expósito (2014) discovered that the perception of sexual harassment exists in the workplace because of the gender roles attributed to men and women in society that prompts men to sexually harass the women they work with. A major cause of gender harassment stems from the theory that men transfer their gender-based role expectations to the workplace, although both men and women may be subjected to sexual harassment, the literature is consistent in reporting that a tremendous

number of victims are women and harassers are men (Herrera et al., 2014). One out of

every two women have experienced some form of sexual harassment or have been

exposed to unwanted behavior (Herrera et al., 2014). With the possibility of a sexual

misconduct incident in the workplace, relationships may experience strenuous

circumstances.

Personal and professional relationships become strenuous once a sexual

harassment complaint is made. A victim may decline to report a sexual misconduct

occurrence if they experience embarrassing or disruptive events in their working

relationships (Mani, 2004). Furthermore, misconceptions can develop if a female victim

laughs at the uncivil behavior and the relationship between the two parties is personal and

not professional (Chui & Dietz, 2014). Next, I explore sexual assault in the military.

Sexual Assault in the Military

Sexual assault is an extremely undesirable occurrence for an individual. As of

2015, the Department of Defense (2016b) defined sexual assault as, any intentional

sexual contact characterized by use of force, threats, intimidation, or abuse of authority or

when the victim does not or cannot consent (p. 3). Alcoff (2014) included sexual coercion

and sexual violence as additional offenses of sexual assault. The emotional trauma a

victim experiences in the aftermath of a violent sexual misconduct event was described

for the study.

Scholars and practitioners have previously documented adversarial influences

victims are disposed to as a result of being sexually assaulted. Bryan, McNaugton-

Cassill, Osman, and Hernandez (2013) discovered sexual assault has an adverse effect on

a victim's identity and self-worth. Furthermore, Cheney et al. (2014) ascertained sexual assault victims experience depression and poor physical health following an incident. Employees deserve a workplace setting free of hostility, policies, and procedures that outline specific rights for employees, and the obligations of the employers (Madkins et al., 2015).

Organizations must develop policies to deter and minimize hostile workplace environments that arise when sexual assault conditions exist. Policies, education, and enforcement aid leaders with the process of handling complaints (Pattison et al., 2014). Along with the policies, a procedures statement should outline the steps for both an employee and a supervisor to follow for resolving any harassment complaints (Pattison et al., 2014). Next, I assess the military reporting system.

Military Reporting System

The reporting system used in the military is instrumental in creating a nonhostile workplace setting. An essential undertaking for the Department of Defense is to create a workplace environment in which military members feel comfortable and safe reporting a potential sexual misconduct incident to a military authority (Office of People Analytics (OPA), 2017). When sexually victimized individuals understand the attitudinal components related to labeling a sexual misconduct event, victims may be more compelled to file a complaint (LeMaire, Oswald, & Russell, 2016). Eliminating the confusion of what constitutes sexual harassment or sexual assault is crucial for the success of an organization.

Sexual misconduct events that are dismissed as casual occurrences disrupt the structural flow within an organization. Unlabeled and unreported sex crimes allow perpetrators to escape the legal process (LeMaire et al., 2016) and provide the perpetrator with an opportunity to commit other sex crimes. The following statistics reveal the top reasons an individual may choose not to file a complaint: 67% worried reporting the incident would cause more harm than good, 66% did not trust the process would be fair, 59% did not think anything would be done to the perpetrator or anyone would believe the complaint, and 48% did not want the complaint to spread to other people or be judged by others (OPA, 2017). In addition, 34% chose not to file a complaint because they did not know how to report an incident (OPA, 2017), or were informed a cost would be incurred with filing a complaint (Chaserant & Harnay, 2015). Step-by-step processes must be circulated throughout an organization detailing who employees can report sexual incidences to and how to report them.

Victims must locate supervisors to confide in about a sexual harassment or sexual assault incident. The OPA (2017) reported 57% of the 744 participants surveyed discussed a sexual occurrence with a member in their chain of command, 51% discussed the occurrence with a senior enlisted leader, and 43% confided in an immediate supervisor. Leaders are expected to act in an ethical manner by ensuring employees feel at ease to discuss and report unethical sexual issues without fear of retaliation (Hassan, Wright, & Yukl, 2014). The leadership styles displayed in the workplace may be categorized as either an ethical or unethical conduct.

Leaders must strive to protect complainants from possible repercussions as a result of filing a sexual harassment or assault grievance. The Department of Defense has taken an active role in minimizing and deterring the possibility of sexual harassment and sexual assault victims from experiencing repercussions by monitoring environments exhibiting retaliatory behavior (OPA, 2017). The retaliatory behavior occurs in a professional setting that includes reprisal and maltreatment (OPA, 2017). Retaliatory behaviors create a hostile work environment for employees within an organization.

The fear of potential reprisal or mistreatment remains a foremost concern for individuals who are contemplating filing a complaint. The OPA (2017) described reprisal as a personnel or other negative response taken by the chain of command against an individual for participating in a protected activity. Maltreatment includes actions of social exclusion or misconduct against a military member by peers or a leader in a position of authority because the military member reported or intended to report a criminal sexual offense (OPA, 2017). Victims should not have to worry about negative connotations when the consideration of a sexual harassment or sexual assault complaint is looming.

Victims who file a complaint may be asked to participate in a study to recount specific outcomes surrounding the event. In the aftermath of reporting a sexual incident, victims who experienced repercussions included: 44% reported the situation continued or became worse, 42% were told and highly encouraged to drop the issue, 21% received adequate assistance with dealing with the situation, and 17% were satisfied with the steps the leadership took to address the situation (OPA, 2017). Next, I explored the influence of leader involvement and decision making processes.

Leadership Involvement and Decision Making Processes

The commitment of leaders in the workforce must project a sense of constancy and stability. The leadership style exhibited by leaders should provide safety and security throughout the organization to maintain dignity, respect and honor (Younas & Rattani, 2014). Leaders are expected to display an ethical behavior within an organization, communicate clear ethical standards and expectations, provide ethical guidance, and hold employees accountable for ethical and unethical conduct (Hassan & Wright, 2014). The aura of ethical standards in the workplace provide individuals with a comfort necessary to approach leaders when a sexual conflict arises.

A leader's ethics must be uncompromised and beyond reproach. Ethical leaders are honest, trustworthy, and moral decision makers (Hassan, Wright, & Yukl, 2014) vigorously working to eliminate inappropriate conduct against employees in the workplace (Chui & Dietz, 2014). Ethical leaders engage in a conduct that benefit all and refrain from harming others (Hassan, Wright, & Yukl, 2014). When leaders establish themselves as ethical, employees become increasingly satisfied, leaders are perceived as effective, the exchange between leaders and employees intensifies, and a reduction in deviant behavior is eminent (Hassan, Wright, & Yukl, 2014). Morality is an essential component in creating a hostile free workplace environment.

Deterring and eliminating sexual misconduct in the workplace is the moral responsibility of everyone. The act of helping others stems from a moral imperative wherein the treatment of humans with respect and dignity becomes salient (Chui & Dietz, 2014). Anyone witnessing a sexual transgression in an organization is more likely to

intervene when the incident is perceived as a moral issue (Chui & Dietz, 2014). Bystanders who observe a sexual misconduct event or possible incident must become active in reporting the situation for the safety of the victim.

Numerous moral factors influence a leader's decision making processes within an organization. Ethical leaders consider the moral implications of their decisions and how they may affect the well-being of others (Hassan & Wright, 2014). A leader's considerations include situational factors such as the severity of sexual harassment or sexual assault to the organizational performance and what actions may be implemented to discourage future perpetrators from sexually harming other employees (Chui & Dietz, 2014). The moral implications as well as the resources accessible for victims are important when leaders are considering the possible deterrent approaches.

The support or lack of support available to employees can affect their decision of whether to file a sexual misconduct complaint. Efficacious leaders ensure adequate resources are available to support victims and improve services for survivors (Pathak, 2015). Leaders exhibiting a high level of ethical leadership provides a supportive atmosphere to victims of sexual violence by decreasing unethical behaviors, increases citizenship behaviors, and motivates subordinate employees to intercede or report an incident (Hassan & Wright, 2014). Finding ways to encourage individuals to get involved in negative workplace sexual misconduct transgressions is an uphill battle for today's leaders.

Leaders encounter several hinderances that interfere with the development and implementation of successful support efforts for victims of sexual harassment and assault.

Several aspects have been identified that impede the Department of Defense's efforts to include the inadequacy of the guidance to address some important issues, the implementation of the sexual harassment and sexual assault program in deployed and joint environments, and the lack of support by all commanders for the program (Schmid, 2010). Victims may experience restricted access to indispensable services and isolation from social networks (Davison, Lozano, Cole, & Gervais, 2013). Leaders should attempt to identify every possible supportive resource for victims of a sexually violent occurrence and make an effort to establish a point of contact for each resource.

Locating the appropriate support resources for sexual misconduct victims requires critical thinking by leaders. Understanding how decisions are made assists supervisors in making better decisions (Heller, 1992). Effectively distributing and employing organizational resources support employees victimized by a sexual misconduct incident (Ejimabo, 2015). Constant support within an organization creates a compassionate atmosphere that victims should expect following a horrific sexual event.

Training events, when conducted appropriately, can be a useful tool for sharing crucial information on the impact sexual harassment and sexual assault can have in the workplace. Training should focus on interventions against incivility and describe the disconnection between recognizing sexual misconduct and intervening against it (Chui & Dietz, 2014). Employees receive training designed to maximize the spread of information pertaining to sexual harassment and assault policies, procedures, reporting systems, and resources; simultaneously, support personnel receive competency-based training that builds skills to support organizations affected by sexual violence (Gallegos et al., 2015).

The support personnel receive diplomas or completion certificates to signify that the

minimum education and training requirements or professional standards have been met

(Chaserant & Harnay, 2015). Any training administered must directly correlate with the

workplace environment that the organization operates in.

Training, if conducted inappropriately, can be viewed as a mandatory event that is

a waste of individuals' time. Training is not a bulletproof defense and when supervisors

ignore or misunderstand the intended messages; erroneous claims will be filed (Chan &

Kleiner, 2001). The Department of Defense has experienced areas throughout the military

where the sexual assault prevention and response training may be consistently ineffective

(Schmid, 2010). Next, I explore the military culture as it pertains to sexual harassment

and sexual assault.

Military Culture Concerning Sexual Misconduct

Identifying the perception of sexual misconduct in the military culture is

important to understand the ways a leaders' decision making processes could be

influenced. The Department of Defense's (2015) goal is to achieve a culture free of

sexual harassment and sexual assault through prevention, education, training, response

capability, victim support, reporting procedures, and accountability that enhances the

safety and well-being of every individual covered by this policy (p, 11). Whereas,

corporate organizations have defined culture as a set of values, beliefs, principles, and

attitudes widely shared within a group of people (Carrasco et al., 2015); demonstrating

how sexual misconduct may be interpreted differently in various cultures (Van De

Griend, 2014). Comprehending how various industries define culture can assist leaders in developing a universal definition for sexual harassment and sexual assault.

Each culture embodies various characteristics specific to that culture. Dominance and group solidarity are perceived characteristics of the military culture (Department of Defense, 2016b); incorporating a value and belief system that includes regularities, norms, rules for working, getting along, and the organizational climate (Firestone, Miller, & Harris, 2012). Previous studies have shown a system of behavior molds the cultural characteristics for organizations where sexual misconduct exists (Van De Griend, 2014). The system of behavior incorporated in the military culture represents a complicated concept to external entities since sexual misconduct has been observed by the public to occur in multiple military settings.

Combined with the cultural characteristics are workplace factors. Numerous workplace factors are found to be in conjunction with the military culture when sexual abuse exists including high levels of workplace hostility, an unhealthy climate of respect between enlisted and officers, quality of training, and low presence of female coworkers (Department of Defense, 2016b). The factors function in cultures tolerant of or increased risk of sexual misconduct (Department of Defense, 2016b). The characteristics and factors are acts leaders must focus on to maintain control in an organization.

Processing sexual abuse complaints in the military occurs through a hierarchical structure. Since sexual harassment and assault are associated as part of the military culture, organizations may be less open to receiving complaints or reporting received complaints to higher levels (Firestone et al., 2012). In the military culture, leaders are

trained to follow hierarchical decisions and orders to reduce and eliminate personal opinions and prejudices when processing sexual misconduct complaints (Firestone et al., 2012). Emplacing additional administering steps at different levels could be viewed as an attempt to remove bias in the processing of sexual misconduct claims.

Cultures may be influenced by internal and external influencers. Leaders, at every level and industry, can influence aspects of individual and community life impacting the internal and social issues under analysis (Wall, 2013). The influences may impact how individuals interact within an organizational and social setting (Firestone et al., 2012). Support from the community is beneficial for strengthening the bond within societies (Wall, 2013). Sexually abused victims can find support from various resources in the organization and throughout the community.

Obstructions can prevent the advancement of a culture. Previous scholars and practitioners ascertained an issue hindering the improvement of the military culture from sexually based occurrences is the attraction of individuals who subscribe to traditional gender role stereotypes (Firestone et al., 2012). The gender stereotype assigns specific social roles to both men and women (Carrasco et al., 2015); ultimately, contributing to an organizational culture based on the gender balance of the employees (Firestone et al., 2012). Gender balances do not override the equality and safeguards employees envisage in the workplace.

Distinct circumstances may be noticeable in sexual misconduct environments. Sexual harassment tends to thrive in occupations where the gender balance is male-dominated and high with masculine qualities (i.e., police, professional sports, and

military; Firestone et al., 2012). The masculine qualities include power, toughness, dominance, aggressiveness, and competitiveness; when permitted to exist, the qualities could become entrenched social norms or behaviors within the culture or tradition (Firestone et al., 2012). Gender inequality may be experienced in organizations and social cultures where masculine conditions exist.

Identifying and eliminating anticipated and unexpected disruptions in the workplace are important measures for maintaining morale. If women are imbedded in occupations that are considered male-dominated, the masculine camaraderie is perceived as a disrupted environment (Firestone et al., 2012). Diverse minority women who are sexually abused in masculine dominated settings believe the misconduct would not have occurred if they were white or from a different culture (Van De Griend, 2014). An important note is all races and genders are susceptible to experiencing sexual misconduct transgressions.

Victims should not be concerned with repercussions when contemplating filing a sexual abuse grievance. The military culture is highly cohesive and lodging sexual misconduct complaints against other soldiers is regarded as unacceptable (Firestone et al., 2012); and the complainant is often referred to as a whistleblower (Ross, 2013). Victims of sexual misconduct traditionally are blamed and questioned, adding undesirable consequences to the culture (LeMaire et al., 2016). The negative outcomes a victim faces cannot be condoned in organizations or society.

Unacceptable behaviors manifest numerous undesirable results. Military organizations that tolerate unacceptable and hostile sexual behaviors silently

communicate to employees the behaviors are acceptable (Department of Defense, 2016b).

In addition to victims of sexual abuse experiencing hostile behaviors, individuals in

power may demand control over subordinate employees through the use of sexual favors

(Firestone et al., 2012). When hostile behaviors are allowed to exist, elevated levels of

workplace hostility, unhealthy climates between enlisted soldiers and officers, poor

quality of training, and decreased presence of female coworkers are observed in military

workplaces (Department of Defense, 2016b). Publicly dispelling intolerable behaviors in

the workplace is an important measure that leaders must consider.

Identifying the best eliminating measures is a struggle that leaders of all industries

experience. If an organization harbors a dysfunctional sexual misconduct culture, leaders

must focus on developing policies devoted to the deterrence and elimination of sexual

misconduct in the workplace and society (Mani, 2004). Cultural evaluations are

important for identifying risk factors of sexual misconduct that require stringent policies

(Wall, 2013). Cultural evaluations can offer leaders an increased knowledge base around

what options can work against sexual misconduct; for example, photographic data

captures the effect of policy changes and discussion responses assist in improving

employee conduct or organizational cultures (Wall, 2013). Supervisors can use a

combination of deterrent measures.

The delivery of a sexual misconduct policy is important to determine its

adequacy. Once leaders develop a policy that they feel will be successful in battling

sexual abuse, supervisors and employees must be adequately trained to ensure the policy

is effectively shared throughout the organization (Mani, 2004). The efficacy of

organizational training venues concerning policies and reporting procedures for sexual abuse contributes to the narratives employees spread about the organization's commitment in eradicating sexual misconduct idiosyncrasies (Firestone et al., 2012). Ensuring developed policies and reporting systems are properly implemented is an important step within organizations and cultures.

The reluctance of leaders to follow sexual misconduct policies and procedures can have harsh consequences. Leaders who do not follow the developed and implemented sexual abuse policies and reporting procedures contribute to creating hostile work environments and a culture of violence (Van De Griend, 2014). A review of the existing literature on sexual misconduct training revealed no scientific basis exists to support that sexual abuse training encourages employee to tolerate or adjust a workplace culture (Buckner et al., 2014). Until the militaristic culture is adjusted, where sexism is condoned unofficially and institutionally, any remedy developed for the issue of sexual harassment or assault will surely fail (Firestone et al., 2012). Next, I explore the social implications concerning sexual misconduct on a professional and personal level.

Social Implications

Identifying and supporting positive social implications can provide employees with added trust in leaders. Effective military leaders must support social policies that endorse equality in relationships; whereas, organizations must support communities that challenge social norms that promote sexual discrimination against citizens (Pathak, 2015). Pathak (2015) discovered the elimination of sexual violence in the workplace is an achievable goal when a resilient commitment is executed by governments, communities,

and social partners to develop coordinated strategies. If sexual harassment and sexual assault are not eliminated from the workplace and individuals experience an incident, coping strategies will be required for a victim to continue working in an office environment.

Victims can be observed implementing possible coping mechanisms in the aftermath of a sexual misconduct experience. Victims of sexual events develop inflexible coping patterns of reacting and relating to self, others, and the environment, and an inability to function socially and occupationally (Baca, Castillo, Mackaronis, & Qualls, 2014). In addition, coping resources are introduced to victims that reduce the impact of exposure to environmental stressors, including social support (Mellor & Golay, 2014). Whatever coping processes a victim needs to create a safe and secure atmosphere is a small price to pay to show support in the workplace and social environment.

Social support can play an essential role as victims recover from a sexual trauma. Victims experience a positive impact when labeling a sexual event accurately during work and social activities, feel better overall, use less alcohol, and receive more social support than individuals who do not label an experience (LeMaire et al., 2016). Furthermore, several studies have identified psychological and social disadvantages for victims who do not label their sexual victimization experience (see LeMaire et al., 2016; Littleton, Axsom, & Grills-Taquechel, 2009) to include an increased use of alcohol or report experiencing an attempted sexual violent incident during a 6-month follow-up period (LeMaire et al., 2016). Closely monitoring a victim's work performance in the onset of a sexual occurrence is an important task for a leader.

In the preceding section, I explored the influences that have an effect on organizational leaders' decisions and the sexual harassment or sexual assault victims experience on a professional, personal, or social level. Leaders must remain open to organizational and social resources that can potentially assist sexual misconduct victims. Numerous themes exist that influence leaders' decision making processes. Next, I will explore the themes that emerged during the literature review.

Explored Themes from the Literature Review

During the literature review 7 themes emerged that may influence leaders' decision making processes pertaining to the reporting system for sexual misconduct occurrence. The themes include gender in the workplace setting, reporting processes, reporting deterrent factors, hostile work environment, leadership contributions and decision making processes, and social comparisons. The first theme I will explore is gender in the workplace setting to understand how sexual misconduct affects each gender.

Gender in the workplace setting. Firestone et al. (2012) revealed gender harassment includes sexual comments or behaviors designed to insult, degrade, or embarrass a specific gender, often women. To prevent the specific targeting, Garcia-Moreno et al. (2015) discovered the promotion of new behaviors must involve stakeholders from both the male and female community members, youth, political and other leaders, police, and teachers. The stakeholders would be responsible for transforming unequal gender norms and identifying measures that eliminate the social

acceptance of violence against women, girls (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2015). Input from the men and women leaders will allow concerns from both genders to be heard.

Unequal gender norms have been observed in various industries. The unequal gender norms are found to include women in the professions of nursing, teaching, domestic work, sex work, and other service professions; the women in these professions are often targets of workplace sexual abuse (Van De Griend & Messias, 2014). Women in senior leader positions experience unethical issues while serving on corporate boards (Carrasco et al., 2015). Leaders at every level must continue to address unethical practices in the workplace.

Defining certain sexual misconduct terms can be useful in minimizing the divide between genders. While attempting to address the unequal gender norms, Firestone et al. (2012) disclosed an appropriate definition of what behaviors are acceptable versus unwanted was required. Unfortunately, the definitions can be interpreted differently by men and women, as well as victims and perpetrators (Firestone et al., 2012). The underrepresentation of women in senior leader positions can cause an additional gap between the genders with regards to the development of fair definitions (Carrasco et al., 2015). Failing to clarify what behaviors are unwelcomed in the workplace will cause cohesion between employees to divide.

Several factors may affect one gender more than the other. Female faculty and staff members were surveyed in Ethiopian colleges, yielding 86.3% experienced both sexual harassment and abuse while in the workplace and felt the mistreatment occurred because of gender (Van De Griend & Messias, 2014). Environments condoning sexual

violence or blaming women for being victimized occur due to the lag of progressive

legislations implementing and enforcing stringent laws (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2015).

Despite the consequences the female soldiers experience, junior enlisted female soldiers

are three times more likely to report a sexual misconduct incident (Firestone et al., 2012).

Sexual abuse is not a situation that can be resolved through silence.

Like the military, sexual misconduct has been experienced throughout the halls of

Congress and various industries. In 2017, 20% of lawmakers are women (Zelizer, 2017)

and only 10% of the women working in Congress know the process for dealing with

sexual harassment incidents (Cottle, 2017). The astonishing number of sexual scandals in

2017 has raised numerous questions about why studios, unions, talent agencies, and other

Hollywood groups have not done more to address the abuse (James, 2017). A change in

the cultural dynamics can fix so much (Zelizer, 2017). Next, I explore the military's

reporting process associated with sexual misconduct.

Reporting process. Policy makers must remain attentive of how effective and

protective established sexual abuse procedures are for employees (Van De Griend &

Messias, 2014). A comparison of sexual incidents, contexts, policies, and practices

provide policy makers with diverse measures to prevent workplace violence, facilitate

reporting, and enhance follow-up procedures (Van De Griend & Messias, 2014). Sharing

positive and negative reporting practices provide leaders with multiple options for

developing successful sexual misconduct reporting processes.

Gaps can exist in an organization's current sexual abuse practices. Knowledge

gaps in the workplace should be filled by expanding the conceptualization that

contributes more in-depth descriptions of gender-based sexual abuse (Van De Griend &
Messias, 2014). Incorporating the thorough descriptions into an organization's reporting
system encourages more employees to report workplace sexual misconduct incidents
(Tseng, 2014). Sharing detailed narratives of knowledge gaps assist in strengthening
organizational reporting systems.

Understanding the reasons why men report sexual abuse less than women is
imperative. A review of the current literature revealed under the established policies as of
2013, military men are 17% less likely to report a sexually motivated occurrence than
women (LeardMann et al., 2013). Men who contemplate reporting a sexual misconduct
incident fear experiencing ridicule, accusations of being gay, charges of fraternization, or
other associated behaviors (Hoyt et al., 2011). Sexual misconduct incidents occur
between individuals of the same sex and is based on sex rather than sexual orientation
(Barreiro, 2015). In addition, an analysis of 71 studies of United States academic, private,
government, and military organizations precluded 24% of women reported sexual abuse
(Van De Griend & Messias, 2014). Furthermore, in deployed settings outside of the
United States, the likelihood of reported sexual transgressions increases (see Firestone et
al., 2012; LeardMann et al., 2013). Leaders should review previous reporting statistics to
ascertain what improvements can be made to increase reporting from both men and
women.

An employee's view of their organization can be influenced by numerous aspects.
An organization's sexual misconduct policies, reporting procedures, and training shape
an employee's views of the level of seriousness concerning the issue (Firestone et al.,

2012). Sexually abused victims are often inclined to confide in relatives, friends, or coworkers when they are not confident with an organization's policies, reporting procedures, or training (Van De Griend & Messias, 2014). Next, I explore the literature to identify the deterrent factors that affect a victim's decision to report a sexual abuse incident.

Reporting deterrent factors. Previous literature revealed that national surveys of numerous government employees who observe workplace misconduct do not report the incidents because leaders are not trusted to take the appropriate corrective action and a fear of retaliation exists (Hassan & Wright, 2014). Van De Griend and Messias (2014) discovered labor and social policies deter victims in the workplace from reporting sexual abuse through the established reporting procedures. Deterrent factors are not always easily recognizable.

As leaders discover possible deterrent factors, implementing elimination measures for the factors can improve an employee's confidence to report a sex crime. Sexual misconduct could be difficult to contain because victims could feel reporting incidents are considered disloyal (Tseng, 2014). An additional study identified victims can feel the issue is not important, the report process is unclear, or the certainty that management will effectively resolve the problem does not exist (Hassan & Wright, 2014). Forty-five percent of federal employees do not believe leaders within their organizations maintain high standards of honesty and integrity (Hassan & Wright, 2014); resulting in fewer sexual misconduct reports or complaints processed (Van De Griend & Messias, 2014). Next, I explore the factors that contribute to a hostile work environment.

Hostile work environment. The original military definition of sexual harassment included verbiage such as unsolicited verbal comments, gestures, or physical contact occurring deliberately or repeatedly and is sexual in nature (Firestone et al., 2012). An expansion of the military definition insists the deliberate or repeated behaviors create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment (Firestone et al., 2012). Richards et al. (2014) revealed sexual harassment creates hostile work environments through the use of quid pro quo or sexual favors traded as a condition of a person's employment. Hostile work environments have a crippling affect within an organization.

Hostile work environments could have adverse effects on sexually abused victims. Previous scholars and practitioners disclosed negative interactions in the workplace not only cause a hostile work environment, but also persistent psychological or physical abuse to victims (Tseng, 2014; Van De Griend & Messias, 2014). The Supreme Court established the guidelines a plaintiff must present for a successful claim: (a) any advances experienced were unwelcome, (b) the unwelcome advances were based on sex, (c) the unwelcome behavior interfered with the complainant's employment, and (d) the employer should be aware of the behavior (Chan & Kleiner, 2001). Identifying elements constituting a hostile work environment is everyone's responsibility; all the way to the Supreme Court.

The settings where hostile work environments are present vary. A previous study showed that sexual harassment contributing to a hostile environment was commonly found in educational and workplace environments (Richards et al., 2014). The hostile environment must be abusive to both an objective individual and the actual victim (Chan

& Kleiner, 2001). Finding objective people and actual victims who describe hostile environments the same is difficult when employers do not establish and circulate sexual misconduct policies and procedures for employees to review (Van De Griend & Messias, 2014). Next, I explore the contributions leaders provide in making sexual misconduct processes successes or failures.

Leader contributions and decision making processes. The honesty and integrity of leaders may come into question at times for employees (Hassan & Wright, 2014). Leaders must engross themselves in the policy and reporting system during the development phase of sexual misconduct programs to decrease the wariness of employees (Gallegos et al., 2015). The development of sexual abuse and reporting system's policies and procedures should focus on the safety of employees.

The swiftness in which sexual abuse complaints are processed is important. Although research has documented the sexual misconduct incidents and impact in the military, leaders remain slow to act (Holland et al., 2014). Employees become afraid to voice concerns about ethical issues when leaders linger in producing results (Hassan & Wright, 2014). Employees should be able to trust complaints will be processed in a timely manner.

The lack of leader and peer support allows unwanted consequences to occur. Previous research revealed military women experience sexual abuse more often than their male counterparts, along with a lack of social support from leaders and peers (Street et al., 2013). Female soldiers are believed to experience increased sexual misconduct when they are embedded in work environments with a high proportion of male soldiers

(LeardMann et al., 2013). The ratio of men to women in the workplace must not distort the fair treatment of either gender.

Military settings incorporate structure values such as formality, rank, leadership, loyalty, camaraderie, and emotional control (Castro et al., 2015). Female employees experience sexual misconduct at the hands of supervisors, bosses, or coworkers in structurally-controlled environments (Yousaf, 2014). A victim's work performance within an organization with structure values can be affected after experiencing a sexual misconduct incident at the hands of an acquaintance or leader.

Workplace settings that are considered male-oriented could affect a female employee's decision to report a sexual occurrence. Female soldiers are less likely to report sexual stressors to military commanders due to the masculine-oriented environment the military atmosphere presents (LeardMann et al., 2013). Commanders must be careful not to dismiss or minimize sexual misconduct complaints filed by female soldiers (Castro et al., 2015). The dismissal would be considered biased and add to creating a hostile work environment (Castro et al., 2015). Female soldiers may lose trust or respect in commanders who purposely do not investigate reported sexual abuse claims.

Sexual misconduct events are not always a crime of opportunity. Perpetrators often seek out vulnerable victims intentionally when previous complaints are dismissed or minimized (Castro et al., 2015). Creating an environment where perpetrators do not fear any consequences will result in the perception that sexual misconduct in condoned in an organization (LeardMann et al., 2013). Organizations must not foster workplace

environments in which perpetrators of sexual abuse are permitted to coexist with the victim.

After care measures for victims of sexual misconduct are crucial. Leaders require adequate training to understand the causes, experiences, and outcomes of sexual abuse to help survivors emotionally, professionally, and legally (Holland et al., 2014); while also ensuring perpetrators of these crimes are held accountable. Ultimately, leaders must remain neutral and not allow unintentional biases to factor into their decision making processes (Castro et al., 2015).

An additional contribution from leaders toward combatting sexual misconduct in the workplace is the development of effective leadership decision making skills. Obtaining a workplace environment free of sexual misconduct requires leadership decision making that aligns the future vision with an inspiration to make it happen, while predicting the possible challenges and obstacles that may arise (Ejimabo, 2015). To accomplish this task successfully, leaders must understand the growth and success of an organization as a whole, to ensure the correct decisions are made and implemented (Ejimabo, 2015). Reviewing practices in similar industries is an option available to leaders. Next, I explore the social comparisons of the sexual misconduct processes.

Social comparisons. Leaders participating in research studies concerning sexual misconduct procedures must respond truthfully and not provide responses they feel are socially desirable (Alderden & Ullman, 2012). The social factors considered include values, roles, behaviors, and attributes that are considered appropriate and expected for

men and women (Jewkes et al., 2015). Sexual misconduct policies cannot improve if leaders do not provide accurate feedback.

Men and women must be considered equal in the workplace. Societies mistakably place a higher social value on men than women, unintentionally creating a range of norms and powers between the genders (Jewkes et al., 2015). The range of norms and powers present individuals with social support that is challenging, weak, or absent (Mellor & Golay, 2014). The norms on gender relations can be explained by gender theory, gender inequity, and social norms of gender relations that are largely supported by men and women (Jewkes et al., 2015). Improving social norms require an effort from both genders.

Cultures embrace diverse social norms. When cultures are accepting of social norms, violence could ensue (Jewkes et al., 2015). The elimination of sexual misconduct and other violent behaviors from an organization or culture requires a social change (Wall, 2013). Participation provided solely by the male gender limits the social change that could improve the attitudes and trust to encourage more victims to report sexually motivated crimes (Jewkes et al., 2015). The deterrence or elimination of sexual misconduct in the workplace could be possible by combining various practices.

Altering the way that a participant is interviewed for a study could provide scholars and practitioners with better results. Participants selected for future studies should be interviewed using an audio-computer process because the data is less persuaded by social influences (Stockman et al., 2013). Socially influenced responses

façade the perceptions of the participants in a study (Alderden & Ullman, 2012). A study containing distorted information will not be valuable for future studies.

Sexual abuse does not only affect the military. Between October and December 2017, approximately 40 sexual misconduct complaints were revealed against individuals in numerous industries including: actors, analysts, chefs, comedians, correspondents, editorial directors, editors, executives, former national football league players, Hollywood producers, photographers, politicians, publishers, singers, and writer directors (Pirani, 2017). A journalist credited for exposing the first accused perpetrator received a threat of being sued by that perpetrator for printing a story that exposed the accusation (Blas, 2017). An open discussion of a sexual abuse incident encourages other victims to come forward with their stories.

The social status of a perpetrator should not be the deciding factor on whether a victim speaks out. Perpetrators of inappropriate behaviors could be high-profiled men accused of forced sexual misconduct or rape (Pirani, 2017). Victims who speak out against perpetrators are an inspiration; the shame of a sexual misconduct incident rests with the predator who is found guilty through the legal system (James, 2017). A summary and conclusion of Chapter 2 follows.

Summary and Conclusions

Information provided by the literature review revealed several themes relevant to the research questions:

Research Question 1: In what ways does the military's reporting system influence leaders' decision making processes?

Research Question 2: How important is it for leaders to develop and implement an

effective flow of information through communication channels regarding the

reporting system for sexual misconduct in an organization?

The themes I explored were sexual harassment and sexual assault in the military, hostile

work environments, leadership contributions, and social comparisons. Previously, the

military has faced harsh judgment by the public for how sexual misconduct had a

substantial affect to the morale and cohesion of the soldiers. The perceptions of leaders

pertaining to the reporting system has yet to be explored. The results of this study have

potential value to the field of management in helping to fill a gap in understanding how a

reporting system influenced the decision making processes of leaders and the importance

of information flow through communication channels regarding the reporting system for

sexual misconduct within an organization. In Chapter 3, I will provide an outline of the

research design, methodology, data collection process, and data analysis procedures.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

In this study, I used a qualitative, multiple case study design to explore the ways a reporting system influenced the decision making processes of leaders and the importance of a fluent information flow through communication channels regarding the reporting system for sexual misconduct within an organization. The method and design were used to explore multiple cases of the same reporting system from the perspective of numerous retired military leaders. The objective of the study was guided sampling, data collection, and analysis of the data.

The problems of sexual harassment and assault are detrimental and stressful events that affect individuals and organizations in the U.S. Armed Forces (Reddy & Murdoch, 2016). The critical examination of the issues must be an important focus of organizational leaders for the improvement of reporting systems and policies to occur (Walsh et al., 2014). The gathering of additional information concerning leaders' perceptions of processing reported or unreported sexual misconduct in the military in this study was essential to aid in the decision making process of future leaders because the well-being of an organization's performance ultimately rests in the hands of the individuals in charge.

In this chapter, I will provide an explanation of the methods used for collecting data, which included the research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, and issues of trustworthiness. The research design and rationale section will include the selection of qualitative multiple case study methodology, the reasons for

rejecting other traditional designs, and the research approach and paradigm. In the next section, I will discuss the role I played as the researcher in collecting and analyzing the data. The methodology section will include an explanation of the participant selection process, instrumentation, and data collection and analysis methods. In the final section, I will discuss the credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical procedures. The chapter will then be concluded with a summary.

Research Design and Rationale

The research questions that guided this study were:

Research Question 1: In what ways does the military's reporting system influence leaders' decision making processes?

Research Question 2: How important is it for leaders to develop and implement an effective flow of information through communication channels regarding the reporting system for sexual misconduct in an organization?

I selected the qualitative method as the approach for this study. Qualitative methods afford scholars and practitioners an opportunity to explore the perceptions and views of the participants within the framework of their work practices as it pertains to a specific phenomenon (Maxwell, 2013). The qualitative method is used to study the evidence gathered from multiple data sources when the boundaries may not be clearly identified between a phenomenon and its context (Miles et al., 2014). The qualitative method was the tool I used to conduct an exploration into the military's sexual harassment and sexual assault reporting system, policies, and procedures.

Qualitative studies offer scholars and practitioners numerous benefits. The essential benefit of qualitative studies is that they allow the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of critical instances of a phenomenon (Yin, 2014a) and learn *how* or *why* they occur (Simmons & Parks-Yancy, 2014). The phenomenon for this study was the sexual harassment and sexual assault reporting system for the military and how it influenced the decision making processes of leaders during the course of investigating sexual misconduct events.

I used data triangulation to determine how leaders' decision making processes were affected by the reporting system. Data triangulation helps in addressing the variables of interest for a study (Yin, 2014a), and using multiple data collection methods corroborates the trustworthiness of a researcher's analysis (Miles et al., 2014). Data triangulation combines multiple data sources, such as the data from quantitative and qualitative studies, interviews, purposeful sampling, and conceptual perspectives, to assist in the analysis process (Patton, 2015). I used data triangulation to analyze the information gathered simultaneously from the following data sources: interviews; observations of participants' verbal and nonverbal reactions to the interview questions; and historical documents (i.e., policies, procedures, regulations, and published sexual harassment and assault statistical reports). Researchers select a design that complements the selected method of a study (Yin, 2014b).

The case study design is a strategy that a scholar and practitioner can employ to explore and understand a topic of interest. Case studies offer scholars flexibility and a myriad of diverse interpretations not offered by other qualitative approaches (Hyett,

Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2014) while allowing the use of multiple data collection

methods from both qualitative and quantitative paradigms (Lalor et al., 2013). A deeper

understanding of theories and extensive exploration of a topic are significant

characteristics of case studies (Chang & Wang, 2013). Case studies explore issues

occurring for a particular event or program (Miles et al., 2014). These qualities of the

case study design were the reasons I selected this strategy for this study. I selected the

case study design because it enabled the exploration of how a sexual harassment and

assault reporting system can influence decision making processes of military leaders in

the aftermath of a sexual misconduct event.

Multiple case studies are used to explore the same topic compiled from different

perceptions (Yin, 2014a). Two or more observations of the same phenomenon are used in

a multiple case study research approach when participants address a phenomenon using

different events (Yin, 2014a). The multiple case study approach enables a researcher to

conduct a more thorough inquiry into a phenomenon than the single case method permits

(Yin, 2014a). In this study, I used the perceptions of multiple participants to compare the

concepts and responses from different perspectives.

There are five primary qualitative designs for scholars to choose from:

ethnography, phenomenology, narrative, grounded theory, and case study (Yin, 2014a).

An ethnographic design enables the scholar to become part of the specific environment

under examination to learn from the participants observed during the course of their

everyday work (Gustafsson, Kristensson, Holst, Willman, & Bohman, 2013). In the

ethnographic design, scholars participate in the normal activities of a participant to obtain

a better understanding of their behavior (Gooberman-Hill, 2015). I did not choose the ethnographic approach for this study because my goal was not to determine how a participant's behavior was formed or maintained.

I also considered the phenomenological design for this study. A phenomenological design is complex and affords the researcher an opportunity to rewrite the theme while deducing the meaning of a participants' lived experience (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). The data for phenomenological studies are collected during extensive and comprehensive interviews with the participants of the study concerning the experienced events (Bristowe, Selman, & Murtagh, 2015). The phenomenological design enables researchers to explore the emotions participants experienced with the phenomenon or event (Patton, 2015). Although the ethnographic and phenomenological designs offered significant research opportunities, Paechter (2013) stated that case studies are employed in real life situations and provide a unique understanding of individual, organizational, social, and political processes. For this reason, I did not choose the phenomenological design.

Narrative inquiries develop around telling the beginning, middle, and end of a story (Patton, 2015). In this type of design, the participants narrate their own personal stories pertaining to the phenomena of interest (Breheny & Stephens, 2015). The participant's story is considered the data and the narrative is the analysis used to interpret the story; the researcher then compares the stories to one another (Patton, 2015). The stories offer insight into the cultural and social meanings of the phenomenon (Patton,

2015). The stories provided by the participants represent miniautobiographies. This design was not compatible with the approach of this study.

Grounded theory is used when scholars and practitioners develop new theories (Yin, 2014a). Grounded theories use an explanatory approach rather than a descriptive one, while using the developed theory to explain the interactions of a setting (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Cumulative coding cycles are divided into major categories to assist in the theory development when using grounded theory (Patton, 2015). Grounded theory was not used in this study because it was not my objective to develop a theory.

In this section thus far, I have described my rationale for selecting a specific qualitative design for this study as opposed to the method and designs offered by the quantitative approach. A quantitative approach uses standardized measures of predetermined categories with assigned numbers to process the perspectives and experiences of the participants (Patton, 2015). Individuals participating in quantitative studies are subject to random assignment for data collection (Burton, Civitano, & Steiner-Grossman, 2012). Hypotheses are supported or opposed by quantitative results (Simmons & Parks-Yancy, 2014). A quantitative method would not have been useful in exploring the effects of a reporting system on a leaders' decision making process because the participants would not be interviewed through surveys.

I used a postpositivism approach for this study. Postpositivists assert that although a true reality exists, it can never be understood fully (Hall, Griffiths, & McKenna, 2013). Postpositivists believe that a theory can be disproved by using a version of triangulation, where data are collected from different sources (Kumar & Antonenko, 2014). This belief

differs from a positivist view, in which reality is verifiable, predictable, and things occur the way they are meant to (Yin, 2014a). Postpositivists present their own beliefs as reality (Hall et al., 2013).

The study encompassed a constructivism paradigm. Reality is believed to have multiple constructions (Frankfort-Nachmias, Nachmias, & DeWaard, 2015), which include the researcher, participants, and readers. Paradigms may emerge after the scholar and practitioner develops the conceptual framework, research questions, and methods (Maxwell, 2013). Critical theory and management theory best support the study because the concepts maximize organizational practices.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher plays a critical role during the development of qualitative case studies. The role is critical because no gatekeepers exist to assess the skills and values required by individuals to create valid case studies (Yin, 2014b). Scholars must possess the appropriate attributes to conduct case studies, including the ability to ask good questions, be a good listener, remain adaptive, maintain a firm grasp of the issue studied, and avoid developing biases (Yin, 2014b).

Scholars must collect, process, and analyze data properly in order to conduct a credible study. Researchers are the fundamental data collecting instrument in qualitative studies (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The credibility of a qualitative study enhances the quality of the analysis presented for future scholars and practitioners (Patton, 2015). The credibility depends on four distinct inquiry elements: systematic and in-depth fieldwork, systematic and conscientious analysis of data, the credibility of the inquirer, and readers'

and users' philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2015). The credibility of a study is a critical aspect of a scholar's role during a research project.

Scholars and practitioners conducting an inquiry of a topic within a particular organization do not have to work in the organization: they can be either insiders or outsiders as it relates to the subjects or resources of an inquiry (Greene, 2014). Outside researchers are individuals who have no affiliation with the organization in which they are conducting their study; whereas McDermid et al. (2014) described an insider as a scholar who conducts research within the work environment of the group, organization, or culture in which they are familiar. There are advantages and disadvantages to a researcher being an insider and conducting studies within organizations familiar to them.

Scholars and practitioners must remain cognizant of the advantages and disadvantages that can affect their study if they have a familiarity with the organization where the study occurs. The primary advantage insiders possess is easier access to the investigated phenomenon, participants, and culture within the organization (Kim, 2012). Insiders are often aware of personal relations that lead to privileged information, meaningful insights, sensitive, and covert issues (Kim, 2012). The primary disadvantage of insiders is the potential for subjective and biased research that threatens the validity, confidentiality, and objectivity of the study (Greene, 2014). Researchers can capitalize on the advantages and dispel the disadvantages an insider of an organization faces.

I was considered an insider researcher during my role for this study. I have 22 years of familiarity with the phenomenon of the reporting system concerning the sexual harassment and assault programs in the military as a retired military leader. I have a

professional acquaintance with the participants in the study. During my 22 years of service, I had the distinct honor of serving with each participant in the same organization as a colleague while observing them in a wide-range of leadership positions. The diverse perspectives and leadership styles of the participants added clarity to this study. I collected data using in-depth interviews, observations, journaling, thorough analysis of the historical documents, and the resources available for review. Triangulation by data source incorporates multiple data sources to assist in mitigating bias from a study (Miles et al., 2014), while addressing the issues of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Yin, 2014b). The participants were advised during their interview they had the option to withdraw from participating in the study at any time and no incentives would be offered so as not to influence the responses one way or another. The participants also were informed their identities would remain confidential and protected by a coding system.

The participants were obtained through the social network website named LinkedIn that is used as a professional network. I do not have any supervisory or managerial relationship over any of the participants. Next, I describe the methodology used for this study.

Methodology

The qualitative approaches offer diverse opportunities for in-depth studies to occur. Qualitative studies provide scholars and practitioners with several strengths to include an inductive approach that focuses on specific events, situations, or people emphasizing on words rather than numbers (Maxwell, 2013). A descriptive case study

enables a researcher to ascertain what happened in an area of interest (Yin, 2014a). Researchers must ensure each component aligns accurately so the information and findings presented adds to the knowledge of the phenomenon.

Participant Selection Logic

I selected 10 participants for my study consisting of retired, senior military leaders, who served in a senior leadership position of a military organization for over 5 years, and processed any sexual misconduct complaint. The leader's geographical location was not a consideration for this study because military personnel are subject to serve anywhere the military is operational. Regardless of an individual soldier's location, everyone is governed by the same reporting system for sexual harassment and sexual assault. Each participant in the study was familiar with the military's sexual harassment, sexual assault, reporting system, and processes and shared their perceptions as it pertained to the processing of diverse sexual misconduct incidents. Researchers must select the sampling technique appropriate to generate the best results.

I selected the 10 participants through purposeful sampling, also known as purposive sampling. Purposeful sampling provides scholars and practitioners an opportunity to study organizations, processes, or events offering information-rich situations useful concerning the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2015). Patton (2015) rationalized that purposeful sampling adds credibility to a qualitative study by permitting an in-depth inquiry into and understanding of a phenomenon. Purposeful sampling gave me the opportunity to select the participants who could provide a plethora of information for this study.

The diverse perceptions provided by participants are welcomed by scholars and practitioners as it relates to the samples collected in qualitative studies. Maxwell (2013) argued sampling is problematic in qualitative studies because sampling implies the purpose of a study is adequately represented by the population sampled. Whereas, Miles et al. (2014) disclosed selection of the appropriate sampling technique is essential for the trustworthiness to address the credibility and transferability of the study. After identifying the appropriate sampling strategy for my study, I established the criterion for selecting the participants.

Participant selection is critical for a study so scholars and practitioners can acquire volunteers from the appropriate population (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). The criterion for participant selection in my study included: familiarization with the military's programs for sexual harassment, sexual assault, reporting system, and how to process reported or unreported sexual misconduct occurrences, the participants had to be in a senior military leadership position for over 5 years, and processed a sexual misconduct complaint. Senior military leaders who did not process a sexual misconduct complaint or were not in a senior leadership position for a minimum of 5 years were not included in this study.

The sample size was a key component for my study. Qualitative studies generally have smaller sample sizes as compared to quantitative studies (Yin, 2014b). The rationale for smaller sample sizes in qualitative studies is because the in-depth information gathered from a small number of participants is valuable for a study (Patton, 2015). Data saturation occurs when there is enough information to replicate the study, additional new

information has been attained, and no further coding is feasible (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and Fontenot (2013) disclosed multiple, case studies require a minimum of 10 participants to reach data saturation. To achieve data saturation, I interviewed the minimum number of 10 participants for my study. In the event data saturation was not achieved, I would have requested through the institutional review board (IRB) to recruit an additional 10 participants for interviews, adding new participants into a study until the data set was complete to assist in reaching data saturation.

Prior to recruiting participants, collecting data, and analyzing the data, consent from Walden's IRB was required. The IRB ensured that every component of the dissertation met the institutions criteria and verified any issue or consideration had been addressed. Upon receiving approval from Walden's IRB, a search for potential participants was conducted on the LinkedIn social website. Worrell et al. (2013) stressed websites established for professional networking is suitable for locating study participants. Based on the communication I had with the IRB, I did not need to obtain a letter of cooperation to contact potential participants using LinkedIn as long as I complied with the terms of service governed by the website. I used the professional network website LinkedIn to locate, identify, and purposefully select participants who met the criteria for the study. The participants were colleagues who I had previously served with in the same organization, sometime throughout my career. I initially contacted participants by telephone or e-mail to briefly describe my study to measure the level of interest for participation. Once the participants responded with interest, I e-

mailed a more in-depth invitation to the participants officially inviting them to participate in my study, I explained the purpose of the study, and solicited and answered questions presented by the participants. The participants received additional information containing an informed consent form for review and consent. The participants were advised the interview would be conducted using Skype, FaceTime, or in-person for approximately 1 hour, allowing me to observe the verbal and nonverbal reactions of the participants. I requested permission from each participant to record the interview. The participants were reassured of the confidentiality of their responses provided, informed when their results would be available, and that their participation was strictly voluntary.

The sample size of qualitative studies must be sufficient enough for the allowance of data saturation. Data saturation occurs when there is enough information for researchers to replicate the study and the ability to obtain additional new information has been attained and no further coding is feasible (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Marshall et al. (2013) added data saturation originally applied to grounded theory studies but later became applicable to all qualitative research that employ interviews as the primary data source. I used data triangulation as the data saturation process for my study. Data triangulation provide researchers with the flexibility to use a variety of data sources in a study (Patton, 2015). The use of multiple sources in data triangulation assist scholars and practitioners in developing converging lines of inquiry (Yin, 2014a). The converging evidence strengthens the construct validity of a study by providing multiple measures of the same phenomenon resulting in findings supported by the multiple data sources (Yin, 2014a). I triangulated multiple data sources in my study that included interviews,

observations of verbal and nonverbal reactions to the interview questions, journaling, and historical documents (i.e., policies, procedures, regulations, and published sexual harassment and assault statistical reports).

Instrumentation

The data collection instrument researchers employ in a study is crucial for the results. I was the data collection instrument using 4 data collecting methods: semistructured interviews; observations of verbal and nonverbal reactions to the interview questions; journaling; and historical documents (i.e., policies, procedures, regulations, and published sexual harassment and assault statistical reports). Scholars and practitioners are the data collecting agents who use diverse methods of obtaining relevant data for qualitative and quantitative studies (Yin, 2014b). The primary data collection method I selected was semistructured interviews.

Scholars and practitioners receive flexibility with semistructured interviews. Semistructured interviews afford researchers an opportunity to provide participants with open-ended questions to solicit impromptu, in-depth responses to obtain data within the designed scope (Patton, 2015). Building rapport with interviewees is essential to obtaining beneficial data from semistructured interviews (Oates, 2015). Researchers should attempt to earn the trust of the participants volunteering for a study to receive a high level of participation for the phenomenon of interest.

Examination of the selected topic of interest requires an adequate interview approach. Researchers employ a semistructured interviewing technique to focus on the phenomenon under investigation (Maxwell, 2013). Maxwell (2013) stated the use of a

semistructured approach trades generalizability and comparability for internal validity and contextual understanding in a study. Interviews conducted in conjunction with observations provide scholars and practitioners with an additional sense of security during the data gathering phase so bias is removed. I developed a 15-question, open-ended interview guide for my study. I used the interview to explore in further detail how each participant perceived the influence a reporting system had pertaining to the decision making processes of leaders and the importance of a fluent information flow through communication channels regarding the reporting system for sexual misconduct within an organization.

The next data collection method I selected for my study was observations. Observation of a participant during interviews enable researchers to witness the visual behavior a participant displays to any specific line of questioning (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). The facial expressions, tone, and verbal responses of a participant can assist the researcher in interpreting the provided responses (Yin, 2014b). In addition to paying attention to visual reactions during observations, researchers must write descriptive field notes, learn how to separate detail from trivia, develop systematic methods to validate and triangulate observations, and report the strengths and limitations of one's own perspective (Patton, 2015). The observations were recorded for self-expression: vocalizing; self-directed vs. hesitant/observing and imitating others' work; active vs. passive and relational behaviors: interactions (affirmative/negative); support; collaboration; lack thereof (see Appendix C). Researchers must approach each participant in the same manner to ensure an unbiased approach is taken.

The development of systematic observation processes contributes to eliminating bias during research observations. One method of minimizing bias is once field notes are taken by the researcher during each participant's interview, the researcher immediately writes up and organizes the information obtained according to the emerging themes (Hirsch, Thompson, Blewett, & Every, 2016). I documented the observations of each participant on my observation guide (see Appendix C).

Another data collection method I selected for my study was journaling. Scholars and practitioners use journal writing to refine ideas, beliefs, and to triangulate data at multiple levels (Janesick, 2011). Journal writing can be used as a tool of communication between the researcher and the participants (Janesick, 2011). Journal writing incorporates a data set of the scholar and practitioner's reflections for the study (Janesick, 2011).

The final data collecting method was historical documents (i.e., policies, procedures, regulations, and published sexual harassment and assault statistical reports). Relevant data may be collected from quantitative or qualitative data sources (Yin, 2014a). Numerous studies, both qualitative and quantitative studies, have been conducted concerning sexual harassment, sexual assault, and reporting systems in the military to provide insight into identifying, developing, and implementing effective treatments for the victims of these senseless crimes (Gallegos et al., 2015). Historical resources provide researchers with a glimpse of the previous information documented concerning the topic of interest.

Statistical and historical documents was analyzed from the current quantitative survey instrument used by the military the "2016 Workplace and Gender Relations

Survey of Active Duty Members" developed by numerous surveys, analysis, data, and statistical personnel working for the research team of the OPA to address the gaps identified between the reporting system and leaders' decision making. The Defense research, surveys, and statistics center that operates within the OPA, developed a survey in 1988 for the military population to provide an independent assessment of unwanted gender-related behaviors in the military force concerning the sexual misconduct occurrences (OPA, 2017). The survey was revised in 1995, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2012, and 2016 at the request of Congressional leaders to incorporate the cultural changes experienced by the individuals operating within the military environment and aligns with the language used in the elements of proof required for sexual assault (OPA, 2017). The 2016 survey consists of 223 survey questions with selected answers, a comments box, and the contact information for the survey processing center.

The 2016 survey provides the leadership personnel with the assessment of attitudes, opinions, and experiences of the entire population of interest using standard scientific methods and meets the industry standards that are used by government statistical agencies, private survey organizations, and well-known polling organizations (OPA, 2017). The survey was designed to clarify how scientific practices employed by large survey organizations control for bias and allow for generalizability to diverse populations (OPA, 2017). The scientific methods used by OPA has been validated by independent organizations (OPA, 2017). The new sexual assault measure was approved by the Secretary of Defense and the Service Chiefs as the crime victimization measure of sexual assault for the Department of Defense and was incorporated into the regulations

governing military the reserve and national guard units (OPA, 2017). Triangulating the interviews, observations, journaling, historical resources, and emerging themes can provide a more complete and accurate account of the information provided by the participants of the interview questions (Maxwell, 2013). Simultaneously, I data triangulated the interviews, observations, journaling, historical resources, and emerging themes.

I developed an interview protocol (see Appendix A) to assist in validating the content of the information collected during the interviews as well as ensure the stage was set for each interview and every participant received the same instructions and conditions. Content validity assures a study's instrument covers all the attributes of the concept of a phenomenon (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). However, some scholars believe content validity has no place in qualitative inquiries (Miles et al., 2014). My interview guide was developed to explore the ways a reporting system influenced the decision making processes of leaders using Questions 1-9, and the importance of a fluent information flow through communication channels regarding the reporting system for sexual misconduct within an organization using Questions 10-15.

To strengthen the content validity of my informed consent form and interview guide, I conducted a field test. Field testing enables scholars and practitioners a means to certify the purpose of a study is clear, the instructions are easy to follow, the distribution measures are appropriate, and the questions are concise and definite (Skinner, Nelson, Chin, & Land, 2015). The field test included the recruitment of five participants I am personally acquainted with (see Appendix D), to review the informed consent form and

interview guide to identify prospective clarity issues in the instructions and questions developed for the interviewing process (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). The feedback I received from the field test was essential for identifying revisions required to the form and guide so clear guidance could be provided to the participants in the main study. The participants from the field test would not be ineligible to participate in the main study. I established a protocol for recruitment, participation, and data collection.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Prior to recruitment, participation, and data collecting, approval was requested from Walden University, the IRB committee, and the military. The IRB ensured all components of my study was acceptable and all issues and considerations addressed. Notification was made to the appropriate military representative that the study was being conducted and a justification response was received from the representative that no letter of cooperation was required. No approval was required by the military since no internal information was collected for my study or internal participants was solicited.

Upon receiving approval from Walden's IRB, a search for five potential field test participants were conducted on the LinkedIn social website. Field testing is important for a scholar and practitioner's study. The field tested participants for my study consisted of retired, military leaders, who served in a senior leadership position of a military organization and my personal acquaintances, familiar with the sexual harassment and assault reporting system, and processed at least one sexual misconduct complaint. The selected participants had performed in a senior military leadership position over 5 years.

I requested participation from the potential participants and collected the data from the volunteers who met the criteria for the study. I contacted participants initially by telephone or e-mail to describe my study briefly to measure the level of interest for participation. The field testing was estimated at 2 weeks, allowing for the dissemination of the invitation e-mail along with the informed consent form and interview guide (see Appendix B), and feedback of the documentation.

Upon applying the feedback received from the field tested participants, a search for the potential participants for the main study was conducted on the LinkedIn social website. Participant recruitment is important for a scholar and practitioner's study. The participants for my study consisted of retired military leaders, who served in a senior leadership position of a military organization, familiar with the sexual harassment and assault reporting system, and processed at least one sexual misconduct complaint. The selected participants had performed in a senior military leadership position over 5 years.

I requested participation from the potential participants and collected the data from the volunteers who met the criteria for the study. I contacted participants initially by telephone or e-mail to describe my study briefly to measure the level of interest for participation. I allowed 4 weeks for participants to respond with an acceptance or rejection to participate. Ten participants were selected for my study through purposeful sampling, also known as purposive sampling. Purposeful sampling allows scholars and practitioners to study organizations, processes, or events offering information-rich situations useful concerning the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2015). Qualitative studies generally have smaller sample sizes as compared to quantitative studies (Yin,

2014a). The rationale for smaller sample sizes in qualitative studies is because the in-depth information gathered from a small number of participants is valuable for a study (Patton, 2015). The data collection was estimated at 2 weeks, with 5 interviews occurring per week. Tracking every interaction and data collected during the study is highly recommended (Lyons & Doucek, 2010). I maintained a log to track all the communications and data collected on the participant tracker (see Appendix D). The availability of the participants for an interview drove the data collection schedule to determine if additional time was required.

In the event a sufficient number of participants responded, 10 participants were purposefully selected and received information containing an informed consent form for review and consent. Participants were advised the interview would be conducted using Skype, FaceTime, or in-person for approximately 60 minutes, enabling me to observe and record the verbal and nonverbal reactions on the observation guide (see Appendix C). The participants were asked for permission to record the interview. The participants providing consent were asked again, prior to the interview and once the recording devices had been activated to confirm consent to record the interview. The interviews were recorded using two voice recorders to ensure a backup recorder was used to capture each participant's interview. Participants who did not wish to be recorded during the interview, but still wanted to participate, were allowed to do so and I took thorough notes during the interview. Experienced researchers may even incur obstacles when attempting to recruit participants for a study (Jessiman, 2013). Failure to recruit the appropriate or adequate participants results in the possibility of bias within the targeted population limiting the

generalizability in the results (Krusche et al., 2014). In the event a sufficient number of participants did not respond, additional participants would have been invited to participate in the study, repeating the purposeful selection process, and the selected participants would have received an information packet.

Upon completion of the interview, participants were thanked for participating in the study and an exit strategy was implemented of reassuring participants of the confidentiality of their responses was provided. Participants not consenting to the recorded interview would have been e-mailed in 1 weeks' time from the interview a transcript of the interview to verify the responses were correct to the interview questions to validate the transcription so member checking could be conducted to verify the responses were what the participant meant to say. Member checking would enable participants to review the researcher's interpretation of their responses for the accuracy of descriptions and explanations (Miles et al., 2014). Transcript validation is an additional member checking process that can be used. Transcript validation permits a scholar and practitioner to reflect on the accuracy of the data collected from the participants and serves as a member checking tool for the researcher (Janesick, 2011). Member checking and transcript validation would be used as an information verification tool to minimize the likelihood of reinterviewing the study participants. Questions unanswered by a participant were documented during the interview and explained during the data analysis in Chapter 4. I informed the participants of the possibility of a follow-up interview. In the event an additional interview was required, follow-up interviews would have been requested through the IRB before recontacting a participant. The contacted military

representative and selected participants were informed the results from the study would be provided upon completion of the study.

Data Analysis Plan

The data collected by a scholar and practitioner requires analysis for developing the results to be shared with their peers and colleagues. Data analysis is the technique used by scholars and practitioners to convert the gathered data into the findings of the study (Patton, 2015). Qualitative data analysis identifies patterns and themes from the gathered data to produce a description of the topic of interest for readers and future researchers (Maxwell, 2013). The analysis of qualitative data consists of a five-phased sequence: compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding (Yin, 2014b). I used the five-phased sequence approach for my study.

In the initial phase, I compiled the relevant information related to the study. Compilation of the data began during the data collection process, affording an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of the study (Yin, 2014a). I used my interview guide to explore the ways a reporting system influenced the decision making processes of leaders using Questions 1-9, and the importance of a fluent information flow through communication channels regarding the reporting system for sexual misconduct within an organization using Questions 10-15. In the second phase, I gathered data and disassembled it by assigning the participants a number, such as P1, P2,….P10, to ensure nonidentifiable labels were assigned. I transcribed each participant's interview word for word for analysis and member checking for accuracy. The historical documents were included in the analysis process. To analyze the collected data, the information was coded

(Yin, 2014b). I initially coded the responses provided by the participants individually to identify patterns and themes, subsequently, I cross-case analyzed the individual coding to identify any additional patterns and themes. Descriptive coding assigns labels to the data collected to summarize in a word or short phrase and is used in the NVivo software (Miles et al., 2014). I used the descriptive coding and NVivo processing software for my study.

In the third phase, I reassembled the data. Identifying the emerging patterns and themes enables the reassembling of the data (Yin, 2014b). Content analysis is used to search for reoccurring words or themes (Patton, 2015). I used content analysis to identify the reoccurring words or themes and the frequency they were used in the literature, conceptual framework, interviews, observations, journaling, and historical documents using the NVivo software. Graphs or tables may be used to depict the data (Yin, 2014a). I used graphs to illustrate the patterns, themes, and reoccurring words that were identified in the data. I used the practice of disassembling and reassembling data repeatedly during the analysis of the data (Yin, 2014b).

In the fourth phase, I interpreted the reassembled data. Interpreting the data requires the scholar and practitioner to explain the significance of the information found, make sense of the findings, provide explanations, draw conclusions, and impose order to the reassembled data (Patton, 2015). Sound interpretations include completeness, fairness, empirical accuracy, value-added, and credibility (Yin, 2014b). Implementing the sound interpretations enabled me to develop my own meaning of the results of the study and explain the link between the findings and the conceptual framework. I established the

link by paraphrasing the quotes provided by the participants of their perceptions relating to the research questions and also connecting the results to the conceptual framework.

All the data collected may not be a proper fit for every study. Discrepant data, or negative cases, is information that cannot be conformed to the study (Redmond et al., 2013). Any data I identified as discrepant was addressed in my study and was not included in the analysis process.

In the final phase, I provided a conclusion. At the conclusion of the data analysis process a conclusion answering the purpose and importance of the study is presented (Yin, 2014b). The conclusion of my study presented the ways a reporting system influenced the decision making processes of leaders and the importance of a fluent information flow through communication channels regarding the reporting system for sexual misconduct within an organization as well as recommendations for leaders and the implications for future research.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility is one of four issues of trustworthiness scholars and practitioners must be concerned with when conducting research studies. Patton (2015) revealed credibility, or internal validity, in qualitative studies are contingent on four distinctive elements: Systematic and conscientious analysis of data, systematic in-depth fieldwork, credibility of the inquirer, readers', and users' philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry. Connelly (2016) shared the techniques used in establishing credibility include prolonged engagement with participants, persistent observation if appropriate to the

study, peer-debriefing, member-checking, and reflective journaling. I included thorough descriptions of the responses provided by the participants I selected for this study by taking thorough field notes during the interviews and observations.

Triangulation by data source, from multiple data sources, assists in mitigating bias from a study (Miles et al., 2014), while addressing the issues of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Yin, 2014a). Data triangulation provides researchers with the flexibility to use a variety of data sources in a study (Patton, 2015). Data saturation occurs when there is enough information to replicate the study and the ability to obtain additional new information has been attained and no further coding is feasible (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Marshall et al. (2013) added data saturation originally applied to grounded theory studies but later became applicable to all qualitative research employing interviews as the primary data source. I used data triangulation as the data saturation process for my study.

Transferability

Transferability is an element that occurs externally to a study. Transferability, or external validity, refers to whether a study's findings can be applied outside of the studied population (Moon et al., 2013). Transferability, in qualitative studies, focuses on the participants and their story without saying the story applies to everyone (Connelly, 2016). Scholars and practitioners validate the study's transferability with a rich, detailed description of the context, location, and people studied, and by being transparent about analysis and trustworthiness (Connelly, 2016). Even with the utilization of a thick

description, purposeful sampling, data triangulation, and data saturation within my study, transferability may not be possible.

Dependability

Research studies require dependability. Dependability, or reliability, refers to the stability of data over time and under diverse conditions, the principles and criteria used to select the participants and detailing the participants' main qualities so the transferability of the results can be assessed in other contexts (Elo et al., 2014). The objective of reliability is to minimize the errors and biases in a study (Miles et al., 2014). Scholars and practitioners must ensure the auditability of the study is maintained by guaranteeing the research questions are clear, the role of the researcher is explicitly described, the data quality checks have been made, and reviews are in place by peers or colleagues (Yin, 2014a). I accomplished dependability through data triangulation and auditability.

Confirmability

In the final step of the issue of trustworthiness in this study, I ensured confirmability was tested. Confirmability, or objectivity, authenticates the neutrality or the degree findings are reliable and could be repeated (Connelly, 2016). Reflexivity is a process of confirmability by which a scholar and practitioner engages in self-reflection and discloses any potential biases and predispositions that might affect the research study (Moon et al., 2013). Confirmability is reached when the study has credibility, transferability, and dependability (Miles et al., 2014). The four elements of trustworthiness: Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability must be met simultaneously for this study to be considered successful.

Ethical Procedures

Scholars and practitioners are charged with the responsibility of guaranteeing that studies are ethically sound. Research ethics consists of scholars and practitioners remaining morally respectful throughout a study (Yin, 2014a). Researchers must ensure that studies are based on justice, beneficence, nonmaleficence, respect for human rights, and respect for autonomy (Haahr, Norlyk, & Hall, 2014). Researchers are bound by ethical practices during a study.

Numerous ethical practices are used qualitative research, including procedural, situational, relational, and exiting ethics (Tracy, 2010). Procedural ethics refer to ethical actions determined as a universal necessity by larger organizations, academic institutions (i.e., IRB), or governing agencies (Tracy, 2010). The IRB mandates participants are not harmed, deception is avoided, informed consent is obtained, and ensure privacy and confidentiality and participants have the right to know the nature and potential consequences of the research and understand participation is voluntary and withdrawal from the study is an option at any time (Tracy, 2010). The participants were not obligated to participate in my study, they were not harmed, and they were informed concerning consent, privacy, and confidentiality.

The second ethical practice was situational ethics. Situational ethics refer to unpredictable situations that come up in the field (Tracy, 2010). Situations are different and scholars and practitioners must repeatedly reflect on, critique, and question their ethical decisions (Tracy, 2010). I described every unpredicted circumstance arising

throughout this study, while making the appropriate decision to preserve the rights of the participants.

The third ethical practice was relational ethics. Relational ethics involve researchers remaining ethically self-consciousness, and aware of their character, actions, and consequences on others (Tracy, 2010). Scholars and practitioners who follow an ethics model keep their promises, maintain a moral compass, and concern themselves with human flourishing (Tracy, 2010). The consequences pertaining to the participants of the study remained of the utmost importance to my study.

The final ethical practice was the exiting ethics. Exiting ethics emphasizes the researcher's ethical considerations beyond the data collection phase of how the researcher leaves the scene of the interview and shares the results (Tracy, 2010). During the exiting of a study, scholars and practitioners may warn readers about the ways the research analysis may be misread, misappropriated, or misused (Tracy, 2010). Readers will ultimately interpret the findings of my study.

The confidentiality and privacy of the information was extremely important. Properly maintaining the original documentation is essential (Lyons & Doucek, 2010). All the physical documents from this study is stored in a safety deposit box and I am the only person with access to this stored data. The electronic data are located on a computer with password protection and external hard drive stored in the safety deposit box along with the physical documentation. The recorded interviews are located on a password protected cell phone and digital recorder stored in the safety deposit box along with the physical documents and external hard drive. All data will be maintained for 5 years after

the publication of the findings of this study. The measures enhance the protection of the participants information and data of the study. Once the 5-year date is reached, the hard copy documents will be shredded and the electronic data will be permanently erased from my computer and external hard drive.

Summary

The qualitative method was the selected approach for this study since the objective was to explore the perceptions and views of the participants within the framework of their work practices (Maxwell, 2013). By using a qualitative, multiple, case study, evidence can be gathered from multiple data sources when the boundaries may not be clearly identified between a phenomenon and its context (Miles et al., 2014). I played a critical role during the development of the research method for this study. I presented all the attributes of the research method: research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, participant selection logic, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation, data collection, data analysis plan, and issues of trustworthiness along with the rationale for all the decisions and selections made.

The cases presented by the 10 participants were analyzed to identify the emerging themes. The criteria to participate in this study included retired, senior military leaders, in the position for over 5 years, and who had processed a sexual misconduct complaint. The social network website called LinkedIn served as the location for recruiting the qualified participants for this study. I also conducted a field test for this study. In Chapter 4, I will present the findings from my data collection process. The results from this study provide leaders with a deeper understanding of the changes required to a reporting system to

assist in making it more useful to the leaders and individuals who process or report what

they believe is a sexual misconduct incident as outlined in the military regulations.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive, multiple case study was to explore the ways a reporting system influenced the decision making processes of leaders and the importance of a fluent information flow through communication channels regarding the reporting system for sexual misconduct within an organization. The qualitative method and case study design provided me with the appropriate strategy for exploring the participants' perceptions concerning the military reporting system and decision making processes of leaders by gathering data, analyzing the information, and reporting the findings. The focus of the study was to explore the military's reporting system for sexual misconduct and understand how the system influenced leaders' decision making processes. Several studies, both qualitative and quantitative, have been conducted concerning sexual harassment and sexual assault in the military (Gallegos et al., 2015). For decades, research and prevention laws in over 31 countries have provided results on the pervasive and damaging health, career, and organizational consequences of workplace sexual harassment in private and public-sector universities (Fusilier & Penrod, 2015). However, there is a gap in the scientific knowledge pertaining to the reporting process (Gallegos et al., 2015) and the investigation and processing of the violent crimes against victims (Vidu et al., 2017).

The research questions for this study were:

Research Question 1: In what ways does the military's reporting system influence leaders' decision making processes?

Research Question 2: How important is it for leaders to develop and implement an

effective flow of information through communication channels regarding the

reporting system for sexual misconduct in an organization?

In this chapter, I will discuss the field test, research setting, demographics of the

participants, data collection, data analysis processes of the study, evidence of

trustworthiness, study results, and a summary of the answers to the research questions. I

will provide a transition to Chapter 5. Next, I will discuss the field test I conducted for

this study.

Field Test

Once I received feedback from my URR that a field test of my informed consent

form and interview guide was needed, I inquired with the IRB to obtain further guidance.

I was informed by the IRB that I did not need approval from the department to conduct a

field test since no participants would be interviewed as part of the test. The participants

for the field test had to be acquaintances I was familiar with so no strangers could be

solicited. The participants for the field test were ineligible to participate in the main

study.

Field testing enabled me to test the validity of my informed consent form and

interview guide with a group of individuals who met the criteria for the study and were

familiar with the topic of interest. Angeli and Valanides (2004) highlighted that

participants of field tests verify the clarity of a researcher's documents to ensure

questions and instructions are understandable and relevant to the study. The participants

of my field test included five retired, senior military leaders, who held the position for over 5 years, and had processed a sexual misconduct complaint.

I invited the potential field test participants to participate in the testing by e-mail using an invitation, which included the informed consent form and interview guide (see Appendix B). I e-mailed the documents to Field Test Participants 1 and 2, and they returned the form and guide with feedback. The participants made the following suggestions. Field Test Participant 1 questioned the wording used under the risks and benefits in the study in the informed consent form (i.e., "The benefit of participating in this study is the findings may provide an understanding to future leaders of the influences a reporting system may have on the decision making processes of leaders in the aftermath of a sexual misconduct event."). Field Test Participant 1 suggested the following revision to the statement, "The benefit of participating in this study is the findings may provide future leaders with an understanding of how the decision making processes of leaders may be influenced by a reporting system in the aftermath of a sexual misconduct event." I considered the participant's suggestion and decided to use the revised statement in my informed consent form. Field Test Participant 1 made no corrections to the interview guide.

Field Test Participant 2 questioned the wording used in Interview Question 3 (i.e., "Describe the ways are leaders allowed to deviate from or add to the reporting system's established guidelines."). Field Test Participant 2 suggested a revision to the question, "Describe the ways leaders are allowed to deviate from or add to the reporting system's established guidelines." I considered the participant's suggestion and decided to use the

revised question in my interview guide (see Appendix B). Field Test Participant 2 made no corrections to the informed consent form.

I made the corrections to the informed consent form and interview guide suggested by Field Test Participants 1 and 2 prior to recruiting Field Test Participants 3, 4, and 5. I e-mailed the updated documents to Field Test Participants 3, 4, and 5 and received feedback for the form and guide. Field Test Participants 3, 4, and 5 found no discrepancies with either of the documents. The timeline for the field test is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Field Test Timeline

Participants	Date of contact	Feedback received
1	28 Jun 18	29 Jun 18
2	29 Jun 18	30 Jun 18
3	30 Jun 18	30 Jun 18
4	30 Jun 18	1 Jul 18
5	30 Jun 18	2 Jul 18

Research Setting

I was the primary data collection instrument for this study. Case study researchers must possess the following skills, abilities, and values when conducting interviews: ask good questions, be a good listener, remain adaptive, understand the topic of interest, and avoid biases (Yin, 2014a). I collected and analyzed the data gathered from the semistructured interviews, journaling, observations, and historical documents in my home office, using my cell phone, voice recorder, iPad, and computer.

The participants scheduled their interviews with me based on their availability. One participant had a professional obligation that called for her to travel during the scheduled interview time and rescheduled the interview upon her arrival to the destination. She conducted the interview by telephone in her private automobile. Another participant was attending scheduled Veteran Affairs appointments and scheduled his interview after the appointments because he was eager to participate by telephone. The determination shown by the participants to take part in this study displayed that neither personal nor professional conditions would discourage them from participating at the time of the study and the interpretation of the results should not be negatively skewed.

Demographics

I collected demographic information from the 10 participants prior to the interviews to verify that they met the inclusion criteria. The criteria included their grade at retirement, total years of service, total years in a senior leadership position, and approximate number of sexual misconduct complaints processed. The participants' demographics are shown in Table 3. A compilation of the participants' demographic information revealed that they served 226 years total. The participants had a total of 110 years in a senior leadership position. The participants' averaged 12.4 processed complaints shown in Figure 1.

Table 3

Demographics of the Participants

	Grade at retirement	Total years of service	Years in senior leadership position	Approximate # complaints processed
Participant 1	E8	20	9	3
Participant 2	O4	20	7	4
Participant 3	E7	23	6	5
Participant 4	E7	21	7	3
Participant 5	E9	23	15	7
Participant 6	E7	20	11	85
Participant 7	O4	23	13	2
Participant 8	E9	30	16	6
Participant 9	E8	20	9	4
Participant 10	O4	26	17	5

Note. Information was obtained from the participants prior to conducting the interviews.
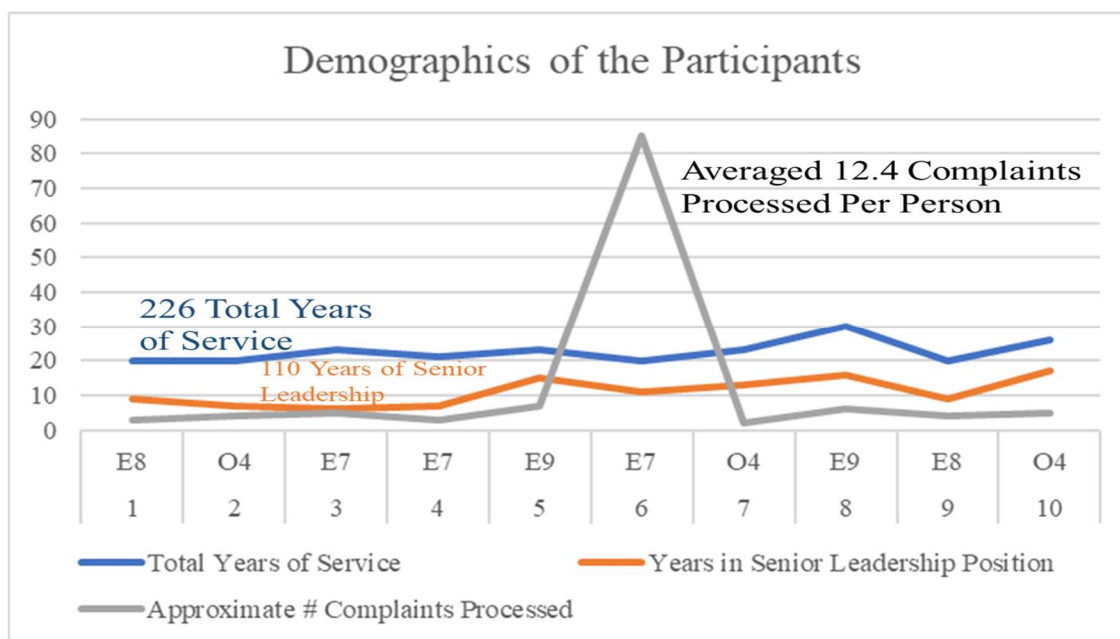
Figure 1. Demographics of the participants compilation chart.

Data Collection

I began my data collection process on August 16, 2018, after receiving the

Walden University IRB approval (Approval Number 08-16-18-0581835). The process

ended on September 13, 2018, when the data from interviews, observations, journaling,

and historical documents generated 16 subthemes, thereby indicating data saturation was

complete. I transcribed the responses provided by the 10 participants to the open-ended,

semistructured questions and observations. I will discuss these identified subthemes in

the Data Analysis section.

Confirmation of data saturation emerged from the themes in the interviews that

included gender in the workplace setting, reporting processes, reporting deterrent factors,

hostile work environment, leader contributions and decision making processes, and social

comparisons. I identified the emerging themes in the historical documents of the

military's sexual harassment and sexual assault reporting system, policies, and

procedures during data analysis and confirmed them with the interview data. Data from

observations and journaling completed the data triangulation I used to answer the

research questions. I will discuss this in further detail in the study results.

The 29 days of data collecting enabled me to accomplish five tasks: (a)

coordinating initial contacts with the participants, (b) conducting semistructured

interviews in conjunction with observations, (c) journaling, (d) analyzing historical

documents, and (e) member checking with the participants from the study. I constructed

an audit trail detailing the timeline of the data collection process shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Data Collection Timeline for the Study

Task name	Duration	Start	Finish
Data collection	29 days	Thu 8/16/18	Thu 9/13/18
Start data collection	0 days	Thu 8/16/18	Thu 8/16/18
Initial contact	0 days	Thu 8/16/18	Thu 8/16/18
1. E-mailed invitation	0 days	Thu 8/16/18	Thu 8/16/18
2. Consent form returned	5 days	Thu 8/16/18	Mon 8/20/18
3. Interviews scheduled	5 days	Thu 8/16/18	Mon 8/20/18
Interviews and observations	10 days	Sat 8/18/18	Mon 8/27/18
4. Placed the call	10 days	Sat 8/18/18	Mon 8/27/18
5. Duration of interview discussed	10 days	Sat 8/18/18	Mon 8/27/18
6. Interviews conducted	10 days	Sat 8/18/18	Mon 8/27/18
7. Interviews closed	10 days	Sat 8/18/18	Mon 8/27/18
8. Calls ended	10 days	Sat 8/18/18	Mon 8/27/18
Journaling	29 days	Thu 8/16/18	Thu 9/13/18
9. Reflective journaling	29 days	Thu 8/16/18	Thu 9/13/18
Historical data	29 days	Thu 8/16/18	Thu 9/13/18
10. Analysis of the historical data	29 days	Thu 8/16/18	Thu 9/13/18
Member checking	0 days	Thu 8/16/18	Mon 8/27/18
Data collection completed	29 days	Thu 8/16/18	Thu 9/13/18

I carried out 10 processes within the five tasks, including having the participants complete the informed consent form prior to the interview as well as review the semistructured, open-ended interview guide. The data collection process occurred simultaneously for 29 days. I completed the data collection process on September 13, 2018.

Initial Contact

On August 16, 2018, I began the initial contact with participants to recruit them for my study and completed contact with participants on August 20, 2018. I purposefully located 10 participants on the social media website, LinkedIn; obtained their personal e-mail addresses; and e-mailed the recruitment message. I received confirmation and

consent e-mails from four of the 10 participants within a few hours of e-mailing the request. Follow-up e-mails were sent to the final four participants on August 19, 2018 for confirmation, consent, and scheduling of the semistructured interviews. The final two interviews were conducted on August 27, 2018.

Interviews and Observations

The IRB approved my interview protocol (see Appendix A) and I used the document to remain consistent during my interaction with each participant. The first interview was conducted on August 18, 2018 and the last interview was on August 27, 2018. All the interviews were audio-recorded on my voice recorder and the recorder on my iPad. Monday was the most preferred day to participate in the interview process by the participants (5 out of 10 [50%]). I maintained an interview tracker to display how each participant was identified, date and time of the interviews, and whether permission to audio-record the interview was given shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Participant Semistructured Interview Tracker

Participant	Date of interview	Time of Interview Eastern Standard Time	Permission to audio-record
1	August 18, 2018	12:00 pm	Yes
2	August 19, 2018	4:00 pm	Yes
3	August 20, 2018	3:30 pm	Yes
4	August 20, 2018	7:00 pm	Yes
5	August 20, 2018	12:45 pm	Yes
6	August 19, 2018	10:00 am	Yes
7	August 21, 2018	3:30 pm	Yes
8	August 27, 2018	1:30 pm	Yes
9	August 22, 2018	10:30 pm	Yes
10	August 27, 2018	4:00 pm	Yes

Several participants scheduled their interview after completing their current work day. I remained flexible for the requested interview times by the participants. For example, due to the time zone difference, Participant 9's interview was conducted at 10:30 pm to accommodate the participant's availability.

The observations of the participants provided a visual interpretation for my study. Observations of a participant during interviews enable researchers to witness the visual behavior a participant displays to any specific line of questioning (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). The facial expressions, tone, and verbal responses of a participant can assist the researcher in interpreting the provided responses (Yin, 2014b).

I noticed numerous expressions for three of the interview questions. Question #3: Describe the ways leaders are allowed to deviate from or add to the reporting system's established guidelines. Participants 1, 3, 5, and 7 had a slight fluctuation in their voice as they began to answer the question and relaxed their tone by the end of their response. Participants 4, 8, 9, and 10 displayed an obvious shift in their posture and noticeably were looking around the room as if to find an answer that would not reflect negatively. Participants 2 and 6 did not display any uncomfortable audio or visual reactions to this question.

The next question that sparked multiple expressions from the participants was Question #8: What are the social implications (external factors) leaders consider when processing sexual misconduct complaints in the military? Participants 1, 2, 4, and 10 displayed similar facial expressions of reflecting when referring to the positive support victims received from agencies outside of the military channels. The participants also

showed admiration when referencing the various medical and mental health agencies. Participants 5, 6, 7, and 8 displayed eagerness when comparing sexual misconduct in the military to the #MeToo movement.

The final question where expressions were noted was Question #15: Is there anything else that you would like to add for the purpose of this study that I did not ask that you think may be helpful? Every participant made a visible shift in their posture and an excitement was in their voice whether to provide recommendations for additional studies concerning the topic (Participants 1, 5, 6, 7, and 8), or hand gestures while providing their response (participants 3, 4, 5, 8, and 10), or stuttered responses (Participants 2, 3, and 9). Each participant wanted their voice to be heard by providing a recommendation for sexual misconduct.

Journaling

I began reflective journaling immediately on August 16, 2018 when I received the IRB approval to begin collecting data. Scholars and practitioners use journal writing to refine ideas, beliefs, and to triangulate data at multiple levels (Janesick, 2011). I began the journal process by recording that the initial contact of e-mailing the recruiting message to the potential participants was completed. As the informed consent forms were returned with each participant's consent, I was proud to see retired, senior military leaders wanted to share their previous leadership experiences about a military program that still affects the current and future military personnel.

Taking notes throughout the data collecting process enabled me to remove any bias from my study and focus on the activities as they actually occurred. During the

interview process, I remained neutral by constructing a semistructured interview guide (see Appendix B) and encouraged the participants to feel comfortable by saying what they thought and how they really felt. I felt the unmonitored responses provided by the participants would enhance my study.

Historical Documents

The historical documents I analyzed consisted of government policies, annual reports, and statistical reports of the military's sexual harassment and sexual assault. The data collected included *Army Command Policy* (Department of the Army, 2014) that defines sexual harassment, sexual assault, and outlines the policies and procedures governing military personnel. *Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military: Fiscal Year 2017* (Department of Defense, 2017), *Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military: Fiscal Year 2016* (Department of Defense, 2016a), *2016 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members: Overview Report* (Department of Defense, 2016b), *Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military: Fiscal Year 2015* (Department of Defense, 2015), *Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military: Fiscal Year 2014* (Department of Defense, 2014a), *Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military: Fiscal Year 2013* (Department of Defense, 2013) are annual reports the military produces to disclose the sexual misconduct cases reported and investigated throughout the fiscal year. *Military Personnel Strength Figures* (Department of Defense, 2014b) categorizes military personnel by grade and branch of service. An analysis of the historical documents strengthened the data triangulation for this study along with the interviews, observations, and journaling to answer the research questions.

Member Checking

Member checking and transcript validation were not required for my study since every participant consented to being audio-recorded; thus, changing the data collection plan described in Chapter 3. Member checking is a tool that enables participants to review the researcher's interpretation of their responses for the accuracy of descriptions and explanations (Miles et al., 2014). Transcript validation is an additional member checking tool for researchers to reflect on the accuracy of the data collected from the participants (Janesick, 2011). Audio-recording the interviews provided me with the actual descriptions and explanations of the participants and served as the member checking tool for my interviews. The audio-recordings were downloaded into NVivo, stored on my password protected computer, and stored in my safety deposit box. I discuss the analysis of the data for the data sources: Interviews, observations, journaling, and historical documents in the data analysis section.

<div align="center">

Data Analysis

</div>

The data collected for analysis included interviews and observations, journaling, and historical documents pertaining to the military's sexual misconduct reporting system to gather information for data triangulation to answer the research questions. Data collection and data analysis are processes that can occur simultaneously (Miles et al., 2014). Simultaneous processing was the option I selected for my study. My data analysis timeline consisted of eight steps shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Data Analysis Timeline for the Study

Task name	Duration	Start	Finish
Collection of documents and resources	29 days	Thu 8/16/18	Wed 8/29/18
Transcription of interviews	14 days	Thu 8/16/18	Thu 9/13/18
Within case data coding	5 days	Mon 9/3/18	Fri 9/7/18
Cross case data coding	4 days	Sat 9/8/18	Tue 9/11/18
Studied themes	9 days	Mon 9/3/18	Tue 9/11/18
Reflective analysis	27 days	Thu 8/16/18	Tue 9/11/18
Determine reliability/validity of study	16 days	Wed 8/29/18	Thu 9/13/18
Compose final written report	16 days	Wed 8/29/18	Thu 9/13/18

During the transcription of each participant's audio-recorded interview, I

conducted an extensive review to obtain a comprehensive sense of each participant's

previous experience and perceptions of their work environments, sexual harassment and

assault policies, procedures, and reporting system. The transcribed interviews were

uploaded into NVivo and individually coded and cross case coded; while the

observations, journaling, and historical documents were also uploaded into NVivo and

the collected data were analyzed for additional subthemes. Sixteen subthemes emerged

and were divided into three categories and are shown in Table 7. I describe the three

categories and subsequent subthemes in this section and conclude with how the

discrepant cases were factored into my analysis.

Table 7

List of Collected Data Categories and Subthemes Identified using NVivo

Codes	Sources	References
Policy Aspects		
1. Program	15	3,568
2. Prevention	11	3,386
3. Command	11	3,437
4. Training	13	5,688
5. Support	9	2,281
6. Restricted	10	2,206
7. Unrestricted	10	2,803
Investigative Characteristics		
8. Investigation	13	4,414
9. Victim	16	22,751
10. Accused	15	288
11. Offense	10	1,502
12. Cases	7	6,154
13. Incident	14	1,846
14. Evidence	7	1,799
Diverse Actions		
15. Retaliation	6	1,534
16. Abusive	14	7,019

Category 1: Policy Aspects

The policies governing sexual harassment, sexual assault, and the reporting system in the military are designed to deter and eliminate sexual misconduct. The men and women who voluntarily put their lives on the line to defend this country deserve an environment free of sexual incidents or as close as possible. The program, prevention, command, training, support, restricted, and unrestricted subthemes address the policy aspects category.

Program. The program the military uses to address sexual harassment, sexual assault, and the reporting system is the sexual harassment assault response prevention

(SHARP) program. The program was referenced 3,568 times. The participants freely shared their perceptions of the program. Participant 1 shared, "What the program did was educate the individuals out there of the different sexual harassment and assault claims that could potentially occur. The program also helped to protect victims who came forward with complaints of sexual harassment." Participant 8's recollection of the program was,

> The program also dealt with hostile or physical environments where people may have posted inappropriate sexual paraphernalia in the office or express undesirable sexual comments in the presence of other workers. The program was set up to ensure the work environment or climate of the organization stays sanitized from that type of environment.

During my journaling process, I noticed the participants spoke highly of the military's SHARP program. Participants 1-8 and 10 (9 out of 10 [90%]) identified the parts of the program that were constant in guiding leadership personnel in assisting anyone associated with a sexual misconduct incident and specific support for victims of violent sexual transgressions. The historical documents established the collaborating personnel for the SHARP program consisting of four primary responders, including victim advocates, medical providers, criminal investigators, and military prosecutors (Department of Defense, 2016a).

Prevention. The prevention of sexual harassment and sexual assault is significantly important in my study and referenced 3,386. Participant 3 stated an objective in the military was, "To minimize or eliminate possible sexual harassment or

sexual assault" and Participant 10 added another objective was, "To prevent sexual harassment and sexual assaults." Participants 4, 5, and 9 echoed Participant 3 and 10's sentiments that the intent throughout the military was to stress to soldiers that zero tolerance was the goal for sexual misconduct occurrences.

A review of the historical documents revealed that the Department of Defense has developed a prevention plan of action with a coordinated, strategic approach that optimizes a prevention system within the military (Department of Defense, 2017). The optimization provides an important knowledge base for future efforts designed to decrease the occurrence of sexual assault (Department of Defense, 2017). The optimization also empowers a safe intervention in risky situations, modifies risk and protective factors within unit command climates, and leverages the leadership's central role in advancing workplaces that promote dignity and respect (Department of Defense, 2017).

Command. Although the Department of Defense is overall responsible for developing, implementing, and dispersing policies and procedures governing the personnel operating in military organizations, the unit commands are the day to day faces individuals associated as the enforcers of the standards. Command was referenced 3,437 times. Participant 2 responded when a complaint was filed, "The only people who needed to know about the complaint were the commander and first sergeant of the organization." Participant 9 added,

> If anyone felt they were sexually harassed or assaulted, it was reported
>
> immediately through the chain of command. If the command was not there, the

report would go to the command representative or first responder so the individual

could begin building a rapport to find out what actually occurred.

Participant 1 commented,

Leaders had to be knowledgeable about the program because … when they had a

victim who fell underneath their command with a complaint, they had to show

they were very educated, understood how to properly address the issue, and how

to send an individual to the appropriate sources, just in case.

The historical documents described an objective the Department of Defense

implemented for unit commands when the workplace environments are infected with

sexual misbehavior is a process called stand-downs. The stand-downs are designed for

leaders, recruiters, sexual assault response coordinators (SARC), victim advocates, and

every member of the military (Department of Defense, 2013). The goal of the stand-

downs is for individuals associated with the military to understand that unit commands

are accountable for fostering a climate where sexist behaviors, sexual harassment, and

sexual assault are not tolerated, condoned, or ignored and where all adhere to the core

values of dignity, trust, and respect (Department of Defense, 2013).

Training. Training is an essential component for sexual harassment and sexual

assault and referenced 5,688 times. The responses by the participants provided for how

often mandatory sexual misconduct training occurred within military organizations was:

Participant 1 responded, "quarterly and annually" and Participant 5 replied,

"semiannually and annually." Participant 9 acknowledged, "Leaders were mandated to

submit reports when training of the policies, procedures, and reporting system were

conducted." Participant 7 responded, "The best thing leaders could do was conduct training amongst themselves to develop techniques they could use to spread the information to the lowest level, stressing the safety of the victim was the most important thing in the process." On the opposite end of the spectrum, Participant 3 expressed,

> The same push that units received stateside to get the information for the SHARP training out, is the same effort that should have been given to soldiers in a combat environment. Soldiers did not receive the same level of SHARP training in combat zones and it was just as important, if not more.

Participant 6 mentioned when training was no conducted properly,

> An accused individual could have used that as a defense by claiming the organization did not conduct training, they did not know, or no one ever told them; however, I know for a fact that training was conducted very often in the military.

Participant 8 echoed, "I know for a fact that the organizations I was in training was conducted and even some extra training for sexual harassment and sexual assault occurred."

The development of training for male sexual victims is addressed in the historical documents. The training is designed for SARCs and victim advocates titled "Outreach to Male Survivors" consisting of 15 modules (Department of Defense, 2015). The virtual classroom training addressed the following: understanding the estimated prevalence of male victims in the military, identifying the effects of sexual assault on male victims,

understanding why male victims may not report, and recognizing ways to reach male survivors (Department of Defense, 2015).

Support. Support is referenced 2,281 times concerning various options established for victims of a sexual misconduct event. Participant 1 explained, "Leaders had to be sure they were well informed and supported the SHARP program so victims received the help they needed." Leaders had to be well-informed about where to refer victims for additional support. Participants 4 and 3 resonated respectively, "Numerous agencies had been established to support the military's sexual harassment and assault program" and "The SHARP program worked fluently when the support agencies for the victim were properly trained to assist victims." While Participant 1 recalled, "There were various crisis centers established outside of each base that a memorandum of understanding was in place that supported any victim from a military base who may not have wanted to file a complaint on the installation" through the military channels.

In the historical documents, the Department of Defense collects information for the annual report on sexual assault in the military in order to update the support programs and tailor services and training to match the needs of victims (Department of Defense, 2014). Throughout Fiscal Year 2014, the Department of Defense's efforts focused on the delivery of consistent and effective victim support, response, and reporting options (Department of Defense, 2014). When the information is inaccurately reported for the annual report, the updates will not adequately address the current issues with the support resources for the sexual misconduct program.

Restricted. The military SHARP program offers victims two options for filing a complaint following a sexual transgression. Restricted is one of the options and referenced 2,206 times. Participant 10 described the use of the restricted reporting option, "Meant that a victim wanted to receive the necessary assistance, but did not want the report to go any further than being reported to the SARC." Participant 7 responded, "In restricted reporting, leaders were not allowed to ask victims questions because they were not allowed access to the information of the case."

The historical documents disclosed victims are permitted to convert their initial complaint from restricted to unrestricted reporting (Department of Defense, 2017). The Department of Defense received 1,659 restricted complaints in 2017 (Department of Defense, 2017). In the same fiscal year, 537 restricted complaints (24%) were converted to unrestricted reports (Department of Defense, 2017).

Unrestricted. Unrestricted reporting is the other option available for sexually violated victims. Unrestricted reporting is referenced 2,803 times. Participant 1 described how unrestricted reporting was viewed in numerous military units, "Once a victim went unrestricted, the case kind of unfolded, and a lot of resources and people were involved; there was no guarantee that the victim's identification would remain unknown."

An alarming fact was revealed in the historical documents during Fiscal Year 2016. A survey of the active duty military personnel uncovered the Department of Defense estimated 32% or approximately 1 in 3 service members indicated experiencing a sexual assault and filed a restricted or unrestricted report for the incident during Fiscal Year 2016 (Department of Defense, 2016). The 2016 estimate was an increase from the

estimated 1 in 4 reporting by service members in 2014, and the 1 in 14 estimated in 2006 (Department of Defense, 2016).

Category 2: Investigative Characteristics

Investigation. Investigations are a critical element for processing sexual harassment and sexual assault complaints. Investigation was referenced 4,414 times. Participant 8 stated, "Each complaint or claim of harassment should be handled the same, with a proper investigation." In order for an investigation to be successful, Participant 5 responded, "If an investigation was warranted, then everyone had to allow the process to work." Whereas, Participant 7 shared, "If an investigation is not handled in the correct way, an organization's operation would be affected tremendously."

A review of the historical documents revealed 6,172 criminal investigations were conducted during Fiscal Year 2016, a 1.5% increase from the reports made in Fiscal Year 2015 (Department of Defense, 2016). A breakdown of the 6,172 reports of sexual harassment and sexual assault included 5,350 service members as victims, 778 civilian or foreign national victims, and 44 victims whose status data were not available (Department of Defense, 2016).

Victim. Victims of sexual misconduct events are the only component in the process whose initial choice in the situation was disregarded. Victims are unethically violated during sexual misconduct occurrences. The importance of the victim is exhibited by the 22,751 times victim was referenced in the collected data. Participant 6 said, "An effective leader's conduct was first and foremost taking care of the victim," and "upon notification of a sexual complaint, an effective leader immediately should take the

victim's feelings into consideration," a sentiment echoed by Participant 4. Participant 10

responded the priority was, ". . . doing what was best for the victim," often times that

may have entailed "moving the victim to save them from being shamed or taunted by

anyone else and to keep their privacy intact" added Participant 6. Participant 2

acknowledged the victim's feelings were important with the sentiment, "Making sure the

victim knew the military cared and their well-being was the top consideration throughout

the entire process." The consideration, Participant 10 shared was displayed by "the fact

that a victim could report to any victim advocate regardless of the victim advocate's unit

in relation to the victim was very helpful in assisting victims."

 During my journaling process, I noticed the participants agreed the most

important person in this entire process was the victim, as indicated by Participants 1-10

(10 out of 10 [100%]) of the participants acknowledging the victim. From the historical

documents in Fiscal Year 2015, the Department of Defense explored actions that would

encourage more reporting by the victims. Victims must be confident that should they

report, they will be treated fairly (Department of Defense, 2015). One action explored

was to exclude a victim's alleged collateral misconduct associated with a sexual assault

incident for the purpose of receiving medical care (Department of Defense, 2015).

 Accused. An individual who is accused of committing a sexual misconduct

transgression should receive the appropriate punishment for their crime, if the accusation

is proven. An important element of the sexual harassment and sexual assault process is

ensuring the right individual is punished. The accused was referenced 288 times. Several

factors previously hindered victims from accusing individuals of sexually disruptive

behaviors. Participant 3 described one factor that occurred "when the accused was an

officer or higher-ranking noncommissioned officer

and the harassed individual was an enlisted soldier. The enlisted soldier's credibility was

often questioned . . ." Another factor mentioned by Participant 5, "if the person being

accused was well-liked and well-respected in the section;" Participant 6 chimed, the

supervisor may have "felt in their heart the accused soldier could not have done that.

They ended up having their own personal bias that this person did not do x, y, or z."

Participant 2 added, because of the bias, "the leader may not have been so quick to want

to follow the policies because they had a hard time believing the soldier could have done

it." During the investigation process, the complainant and accused are separated,

Participant 5 explained, "removing the complainant from the area of the accused so the

complainant did not feel shunned upon." But when the accused is removed from the unit,

Participant 2 explained,

> Putting more information out could help organizations restore morale. Because
>
> soldiers would see that if the accused soldier was found guilty, they did not just
>
> get moved to another unit, but also suffered the punishment that went with that
>
> crime.

A review of the historical documents revealed the Secretary of Defense, in Fiscal

Year 2013, ordered the development and implementation of a policy allowing the

administrative reassignment or transfer of an accused service member provided this

protected the victim and balanced the interests of the victim and the alleged offender

(Department of Defense, 2014). The Secretary of Defense wanted to enhance the ways in

that the military justice system encouraged victim participation, while maintaining the rights of the accused (Department of Defense, 2014).

Offense. When an accused individual is charged for a sexual harassment or sexual assault event, the charge is the offense. Offense was referenced 1,502 times. The offense of an accused must be determined by a legal official. Participant 5 observed during her time in the military, "A mishandled investigation almost would have certainly given the person accused of an offense an out. So, those steps" for the reporting system "were established for a reason and it was very important to follow them to bring the actual event to light and get the true justice for both parties."

In the historical documents, 77% of the service members tried for a sexual assault offense were convicted of at least one charge at trial (Department of Defense, 2013). The charges stemmed from offenses including a sexual assault or some other charge such as burglary, physical assault, etc. The punishment numerous founded subjects received were confinement, a fine or forfeiture of pay, reduction in rank, and a punitive discharge or dismissal (Department of Defense, 2013).

Cases. Sexual harassment and sexual assault cases handled at the unit level had to be closely monitored. Cases was referenced 6,154 times. Participant 6 explained that leaders charged with investigating a complaint,

> If the leader took and followed the guidelines step-by-step or followed the matrix that was associated with the guidelines, they did a good job because the guidelines provided the guidance necessary to do what needed to be done for each type of reported cases.

Participant 7 echoed, "If the investigation is handled in the correct way, then no one would even know about the case." Participant 9 reminded readers, regardless of the outcome of an investigation, "There were no winners in sexual misconduct cases. At least two soldiers will be disturbed and the decision of a case could affect the morale of everyone in an organization."

Data from the historical documents disclosed the Department of Defense has created a defense sexual assault incident database capturing sexual assault case information for restricted and unrestricted reports (Department of Defense, 2016). The database is used to provide improved oversight of sexual assault cases (Department of Defense, 2016). The database also offers the department the capability to meet reporting requirements, validate data, and standardize the collected information (Department of Defense, 2016).

Incidents. As sexual misconduct incidents occur in military units, leaders work to build a trusting relationship with the victim, encouraging them to come forward and report the incident. Incident was referenced 1,846 times. Participant 2 emphasized, "Communication is key" and building trust with victims solidified they "knew they had a place to go to report those types of incidents." Participant 4 stressed, it was important for leaders to "find out what the victim's train of thought might be after an incident occurred." Participant 2 also added, when communication was absent "incidents did not get reported." Participant 3 mentioned, "Leaders tried not to make a wrong judgment based on the environment the victim may have found themselves in, such as a club or when alcohol was involved with the incident." Participant 3 also responded, "When

sexual misconduct incidents occurred in other societies, like the entertainment industry or with sports doctors, those incidents were looked at through the same lens that the military incidents were."

In the Fiscal Year 2015 report, the Department of Defense revealed 74% of substantiated incidents occurred on duty (233 out of 315; Department of Defense, 2015). The substantiated complaints often involved multiple allegations of sexually harassing behavior, a total of 353 types of allegations were reported (Department of Defense, 2015). Maintaining an accurate account of the allegations yearly is an important responsibility for the department (Department of Defense, 2015).

Evidence. The evidence collected during an investigation must not be compromised so a guilty perpetrator is properly prosecuted. Evidence was referenced 1,799 times. Participant 1 explained the importance of evidence,

> If the leader failed to do what the regulation said step by step, that could be the cause of a case being thrown out, evidence not being collected or handled appropriately, or timeliness of the reporting. I think evidence was definitely one of the things that needed to be gathered in a timely manner so the evidence would not be potentially lost. Leaders had to be educated on evidence collection to ensure victims did not destroy the possible evidence and the victims were taken to the appropriate places immediately following an incident so the processing occurred correctly and no information was forgotten.

Information found in the historical documents revealed the military's sexual assault prevention and response policies and actions were evidence-based and data-driven

(Department of Defense, 2016). In Fiscal Year 2016, the Department of Defense acquired

sufficient evidence to take some kind of disciplinary action in 64% of the cases within the

department's legal authority (Department of Defense, 2016). The remaining 36% of the

cases did not receive disciplinary action due to missing evidentiary or other legal factors,

such as the victim declining to follow through with their complaint, there was insufficient

evidence of an offense to prosecute, or other reasons (Department of Defense, 2016).

Category 3: Diverse Actions

Retaliation. A main concern for victims contemplating filing a sexual harassment

or sexual assault complaint was the possible retaliation that could follow. Retaliation was

referenced 1,534 times. Participant 4 commented, "Leaders worked extensively to ensure

victims did not experience reprisal from other soldiers within the unit;" also "A good

commander would ensure the victim was removed from the situation to make sure the

victim suffers no reprisal for filing a complaint."

Discovered in the historical documents, the Department of Defense advocated that

no service member should fear retaliation associated with reporting a sexual harassment

or sexual assault misconduct event (Department of Defense, 2016). In Fiscal Year 2016,

the Secretary of Defense targeted retaliatory behavior associated with reporting sexual

assault and sexual harassment (Department of Defense, 2016). The military law and

policy prohibited service members from experiencing retaliatory behavior associated with

protected communication, such as disclosing a sexual assault report (Department of

Defense, 2016). The department imposed that any retaliatory behavior impacting a

service members' professional opportunities constituted reprisal (Department of Defense, 2016).

Abusive. Abusive workplace atmospheres are not advantageous in the military. Abusive was referenced 7,019 times. Participant 8 stated, "It is extremely important that the chain of command addresses the issue quickly without exposing the victim or complainant to any further abuse within the organization" because "no soldier or civilian deserves to be mistreated or forced to work in an environment that is not suitable or conducive to being a productive organization." Participant 4 was adamant,

Other industries should take a page out to the military's handbook of how to deal with sexual misconduct events. The system is not perfect, but the military continues to encourage victims, or anyone who suspects sexual misconduct activities were occurring, to come forward and allow the system to work for them to stop any abusive sexual behaviors from taking anything away from them.

While journaling, I learned Participants 1-6, 8, and 9 (8 out of 10 [80%]) felt no soldier or any other person working for a military organization should work in a setting that displayed an abusive workplace environment. In Fiscal Year 2013, 35% (1,319 out of 3,768) of the victims experienced an abusive sexual misconduct event (Department of Defense, 2013). The 1,319 abusive sexual encounters were unrestricted reporting (Department of Defense, 2013). Leaders and coworkers do not always know the extent a victim suffered during the sexual misconduct incident and returning to a work environment where additional abuse could occur is not a conducive atmosphere for the victim.

Discrepant Cases

I did not identify any discrepant cases or nonconfirming data for the subthemes not meeting the selection criteria for the study which included retired, senior military leaders, in the position for over 5 years, and who had processed a sexual misconduct complaint. Each participant was governed by the same sexual harassment and sexual assault program and reporting system. The diverse perceptions displayed by the participants were due to the experiences attained from various organizations they were assigned to, but the participants agreed on the importance of the sexual harassment, sexual assault, reporting system policies, procedures, and regulations.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

I implemented the credibility strategies noted in Chapter 3, that included using multiple sources of data for triangulation and data saturation until no further coding was feasible. The data collected from interviews, observations, journaling, and historical documents included thick, rich information I used to develop themes, subthemes, and patterns in the NVivo software, coding, tables, and figures to indicate the validity of the study results. The same collected data was used for triangulation to answer the research questions. Analysis and triangulation of the collected data was used to endorse or refute the findings from previous studies identified in Chapter 2. One adjustment was made to the strategies from Chapter 3, member checking and transcript validation was not required for my study since every participant consented to being audio-recorded and the interviews were transcribed word for word.

Transferability

I implemented the transferability strategies noted in Chapter 3, which included

using a rich, detailed description of the context, location, and people studied, and by

being transparent about analysis and trustworthiness (Connelly, 2016). The individuals

studied were purposefully sampled who met the criteria of retired, senior military leaders,

in the position for over 5 years, and who had processed a sexual misconduct complaint.

Data saturation of the interviews, observations, journaling, and historical documents

continued until no additional subthemes were identified. The major themes emerged

during the literature review and were confirmed during the analysis of the collected data

that included reporting process, leader decision making processes, gender in the

workplace setting, reporting deterrent factors, hostile work environments, leader

contributions, and social comparisons. The 16 subthemes emerged during the analysis of

the collected data included program, prevention, restricted, unrestricted, investigation,

cases, evidence, victim, accused, incident, retaliation, abusive, command, training,

support, and offenses and were confirmed during the data analysis. Even with the

utilization of a thick description, purposeful sampling, data triangulation, and data

saturation within my study, transferability may not be possible for other similar studies.

Dependability

I implemented the dependability strategies noted in Chapter 3 by implementing an

audit trail and data triangulation. The audit trail included conducting a field test of my

informed consent form and interview guide. The Field Test Participants verified the

clarity of the documents I developed to ensure the instructions and questions were

understandable and relevant to the study (Angeli & Valanides, 2004). The 10 participants were audio-recorded and I transcribed the interviews word for word to ensure the participants perceptions would be accurately described. Single-case and cross-case coding of the interviews and observations, journaling, and historical documents identified the converging themes.

Confirmability

I implemented the confirmability strategies noted in Chapter 3 by remaining neutral and maintaining a reflexive journal. Confirmability, or objectivity, authenticates the neutrality or the degree findings are reliable and could be repeated (Connelly, 2016). Reflexivity is a process of confirmability by which a scholar and practitioner engages in self-reflection and discloses any potential biases and predispositions that might affect the research study (Moon et al., 2013). I used an interview guide to remain neutral and minimize any potential biases from the participants.

I identified four possible assumptions for the study. The first assumption was the participants would be opposed to discussing sexual harassment and assault activities. The second assumption concerning the participants was the responses supplied during the interviews would be truthful. The third assumption concerning the participants was their opposition to sexual misconduct occurrences. The final assumption was the results from the study may be useful for leaders of any industry to assist in the deterrence and elimination of sexually disruptive organizational environments. I compared the results from the study against the assumptions to confirm this study.

Study Results

The research questions for this study were:

Research Question 1: In what ways does the military's reporting system influence leaders' decision making processes?

Research Question 2: How important is it for leaders to develop and implement an effective flow of information through communication regarding the reporting system for sexual misconduct in an organization?

I supported the research questions using the multiple data sources that included semistructured interviews, observations of the participants, reflexive journaling, and historical documents to include policies, procedures, regulations, and published sexual harassment and assault statistical reports by the military to answer the research questions.

First, I discuss the multiple data sources supporting the emergent themes for the reporting process, leader decision making processes, and gender in the workplace setting. I present the evidence that could add to the phenomenon related to reporting systems occurrence of themes and subthemes in the data. I use data triangulation as the data saturation to answer Research Question 1.

Emergent Theme 1: Reporting Process

The reporting process theme emerged in 100% of the multiple data sources of the interviews, observations, journaling, and historical documents of the military's sexual misconduct reports. Reporting process was referenced 37,260 times. Four subthemes for the reporting process emerged including program, prevention, restricted, and unrestricted. The subthemes that occurred in the data ranged from 42% to 92% shown in Table 8.

Table 8

Emergent Theme 1: Reporting Process

	Participant interviews / observations										Journaling	Historical documents	Percentage
	1	2	3	4 5	6 7	8	9	10				
Reporting process	x	x	x	x x	x x	x	x	x	x	x	100%
Program	x	x	x	x x	x x	x		x	x	x	92%
Prevention	x	x	x		x x					x	50%
Restricted	x	x			x		x			x	42%
Unrestricted	x	x			x		x			x	42%

Interviews. The participants shared numerous perceptions of the military's

reporting process for the sexual harassment and sexual assault program.

Participant 1's Response,

The military's reporting process works in conjunction with the SHARP program.

There were some very specific requirements for the reporting processes that the

military had for the sexual harassment and assault complaints. The way the

reporting was step-by-step instructions were given. The first thing that should

have been explained to a victim of what reporting system they wanted to use;

leaders were not really allowed to give victims advice to assist them in deciding

which reporting route was best for them. I think understanding the reporting was

very important and critical because if someone was unaware of the reporting

options, the right person would not have been contacted who could assist a

potential victim. Because there were two different types of reporting systems

which were restricted and unrestricted and the two options were very different.

Leaders should not have deviated from the established guidelines, that's why those guidelines were there. Any deviation from the guidelines would have put the process in jeopardy. It would have put the reporting the victim was trying to make in a bad state. If the leader failed to do what the regulation said step by step, that could be the cause of a case being thrown out, evidence not being collected or handled appropriately, or timeliness of the reporting. Because there were by-laws and regulations that governed how a reporting was to be done, when it is done, and how long it is done. I would say that leaders should not have the option of deviating from what the regulation said. But what I will say as a disclaimer, if someone's life was in danger, if there was a safety issue, or if there was an immediate safety concern, I might say that should have been the only time that a leader should have been able to deviate from the norm. But other than that, if there was no safety issue with the victim or there was no threat to life issue, then there shouldn't have been any deviation.

Participant 2's Response,

The military's reporting system varied for the sexual harassment and sexual assault program. When a person felt like they were assaulted or abused, they had several ways they could have reported it. The victim could go directly to their leader and report it and the leader should have taken the victim straight to a SHARP representative. From there, the victim could select whether they wanted to file a restricted or unrestricted complaint.

Participant 3's Response,

Leaders would take into consideration all of the information available concerning a complaint and follow the steps of the reporting system to ensure the information was properly distributed to the appropriate agency. The first thing leaders could do is ensure soldiers are thoroughly informed of the entire reporting process for sexual misconduct. The process started when a soldier filed a complaint, whether it was formal or informal. The soldier decided which route they wanted to take. It could have been as low as the soldier informing a team leader of a harassment and the squad leader addressed the issue with the person harassing the soldier or a formal complaint could have been filed from there. That was just one of the ways the military was trying to eliminate the degree of sexual misconduct in the workplace.

Participant 4's Response, "Soldiers were informed that the main objective of the program was reporting any and all sexual misconduct incidents".

Participant 5's Response,

The reporting system offered two ways a person could report a complaint, formal or informal. The reporting processes differed because whichever way a complainant decided to go determined which office would receive the complaint. The process was outlined not only for leaders to process complaints but for complainants to see what the process was and if the complainant selected a formal complaint they may not have wanted to go through the formalities of the complaint. Because maybe who the female had a complaint about was in a

position they felt the complaint may not have been taken seriously. That was why

complainants sometimes would have reservations about filing a complaint.

Participant 6's Response,

When I was in, someone would call me or come to my office and told me a story

or said something happened. Immediately at that time I would record what was

happening. I immediately either reported it to my command or if it was heinous or

sexual assault or sexual abuse I would immediately report it to the military

intelligence or to the criminal investigative command. Most times I would

accompany the victim to those agencies or to the hospital to get them help

depending on the length of time that the assault happened.

Participant 7's Response,

The two systems of reporting were restricted or unrestricted and very few people

were supposed to be informed. If leaders are not familiar with the proper reporting

procedures, then victims will not be referred to the appropriate agencies for

assistance. The victim will lose trust in their leader.

Participant 8's Response,

The military has in place, I experienced during my time, was the SHARP

program. The program deals with people, whether they are military or civilian,

that experienced unwelcome sexual advances, approached for sexual favors, or

repeated advances that maybe quid pro quo, this for that, or something in return to

advance the victim's career. What I saw over the years was some leaders would

listen to the complaint and attempt to address the complaint at their level, with an

untrained eye, try to determine the validity of a person's complaint. That was not the right answer. If a person reports an incident, it is imperative that the chain of command processes the complaint in the manner that is set forth in the regulations and made sure people understood how the reporting system worked.

Participant 9's Response,

The reporting system guided leaders during their processing of sexual misconduct complaints. Leaders were not allowed to deviate from the guidelines. The whole protocol had to be followed. If a leader deviated from or add steps to the guidelines, they would have been questioned on why they choose to alter the reporting process.

Participant 10's Response,

The military's sexual harassment assault response prevention program is designed to give the victim the option of restricted or unrestricted reporting. The victim reports an assault or harassment complaint to a sexual assault victim advocate. Depending on the victim's choice of reporting dictates how the victim advocate files the report. Also, the victim advocate is there for the victim during the entire process of reporting and prosecution process, if applicable. The reporting system is designed to assist the commander with knowing who, when, where, how, and why? By knowing the aforementioned, the commander will be able to assess the issues and implement new procedures, if needed. The policies belong to the commander, which allow him or her to easily deviate from his or her reporting system.

Observations. Interview Question #3 sparked numerous expressions. Question #3: Describe the ways leaders are allowed to deviate from or add to the reporting system's established guidelines. Participants 1, 3, 5, and 7 had a slight fluctuation in their voice as they began to answer the question and relaxed their tone by the end of their response. Participants 4, 8, 9, and 10 displayed an obvious shift in their posture and noticeably were looking around the room as if to find an answer that would not reflect negatively. Participants 2 and 6 did not display any uncomfortable audio or visual reactions to this question.

Journaling. My journaling for this emergent theme included the observations from Interview Question #3. Participants 1, 2, 4, 7, and 9 were adamant that leaders should not have deviated from the military's established reporting system guidelines. The participants felt any deviation would jeopardize the legitimacy of the victim's complaint. Participants 3, 6, and 10 felt leaders were allowed to add to the established guidelines if the additions assisted in encouraging victims to come forward and report sexual transgressions. Participants 5 and 8 were unsure if deviations were authorized. Participant 5 worried that a complaint made with deviations to the guidelines would cause the complaint to be mishandled and participant 8 totally did not agree with any deviations to the guidelines.

Historical documents. The military's goal is to encourage greater reporting by service members (Department of Defense, 2017). In order for the military to achieve this, a response system was developed to promote and sustain a fair and safe reporting process that instilled confidence and empowered individuals to report (Department of Defense,

2017). Evidence diminishes across time the longer a victim waits to report an incident or to cooperate with an investigation, it becomes more challenging to hold a subject accountable for their actions (Department of Defense, 2013). Delayed reporting trends indicated that the sexual assault offense categories that involve a sexual act such as rape were more likely to be delayed in the reporting process compared to offense categories that involve sexual contact such as aggravated sexual contact (Department of Defense, 2013). The subthemes program, prevention, restricted, and unrestricted were described and discussed in the data analysis section. I used the explore diagram function in NVivo to create a graphic visualization for reporting process to display the connections between the multiple data sources of the interviews, observations, journaling, historical documents of the military's reporting system shown in Figure 2.
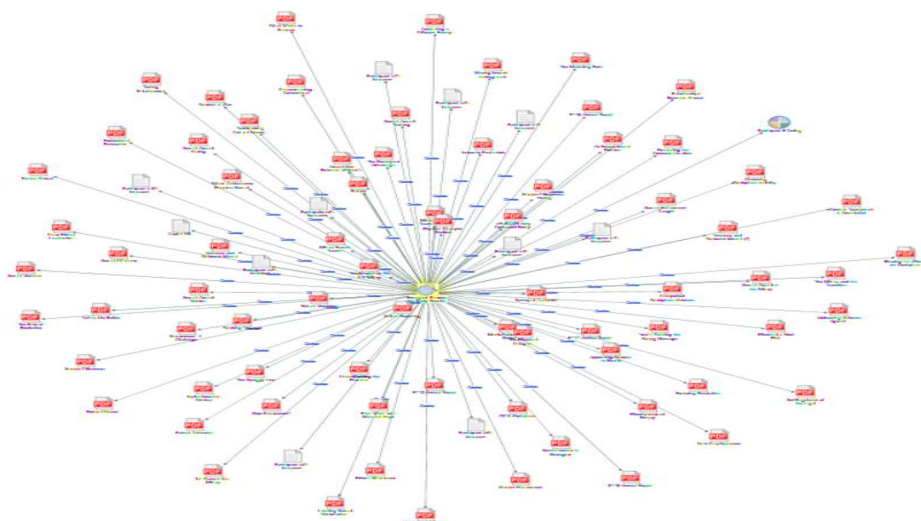
Figure 2. Reporting process node generated using NVivo.

Emergent Theme 2: Leader Decision Making Processes

The leader decision making processes theme emerged in 100% of the multiple data sources of the interviews, observations journaling, and historical documents of the

military's sexual misconduct reports. Leader decision making processes was referenced 20,660 times. Three subthemes for the leader decision making processes emerged including investigation, cases, and evidence. The subthemes that occurred in the data ranged from 17% to 67% shown in Table 9.

Table 9

Emergent Theme 2: Leader Decision Making Processes

	Participant interviews / observations										Journaling	Historical documents	Percentage
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
Leader decision making	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	100%
Investigation		x		x	x		x	x	x	x		x	67%
Cases	x					x		x	x			x	42%
Evidence	x											x	17%

Interviews. Numerous perceptions were provided by the participants concerning leader decision making processes. No observations identified for this theme.

Participant 1's Response,

If a person came to a leader with a complaint of something that occurred with them, the first thing a leader should have done was ask the potential victim if they were the first person they informed of the incident because that could possibly cause the case to be an unrestricted case versus a restricted case. In a restricted case, only certain individuals would have been informed of the incident and would have a need to know. A confidentiality clause would have been implied, there wouldn't be a court case done, or no police would have necessarily have

been involved. So, I think as a leader, that would have been the first thing that should have been explained to a victim of what reporting system they wanted to use, and then the leader should have guided the victim in the right reporting system direction. The victims received advice from legal assistance or law enforcement who investigated complaints. Leaders would normally like to know what happened to their soldiers to provide assistance and the system guidelines may have stipulated that the chain of command was not allowed to question the victim, which tied the command's hands of what they could do to help a victim in their organization. The victim's safety always remained important to leaders.

Participant 2's Response,

From my experience as a former leader, when someone filed a complaint, the main thing was to keep it quiet. The only people who needed to know about the complaint were the commander and first sergeant of the organization. But, as in most commands, everyone eventually knew what was going on. It was the leader's responsibility to get the complainant to the right agencies in a timely manner. The policies were put into place to help the victims and the person who ended up investigating the complaint. A good leader strictly adhered to the policies and guidelines set forward, it protected all those involved in the process. The reporting system was cut and dry. Leaders should not have deviated or added to the policies or guidelines. Leaders were supposed to report to the required people from various agencies. That guided a leader in their process and kept them from making any mistakes along the process, by strictly adhering to the guidelines

a leader did not make any mistakes.

Participant 3's Response,

A leader process should have been to keep the victim's trust and informed of the process and options that were available to them. And leaders must reassure victims that their information would remain confidential. Most leaders included outside agencies to help create a comfortable environment for the victim. This addition was used to assist victims in getting back to a normal life. Leaders remained available for victims even after the victim or leader had left the unit and the victim reached out to the leader for support. It was obvious the victim felt comfortable with that leader, so the leader continued to be a support option for the victim.

Participant 4's Response,

The system provided leaders with guidance on how to properly assist an individual who came forward to report a sexual harassment or sexual assault incident. Leaders weren't allowed to deviate from the guidelines. The guidelines were put in place to guide leaders at every level through the reporting process. Once a complaint was filed, leaders were expected to follow certain steps to maintain the integrity of the reporting process and provide the best assistance to the person who filed the complaint. Leaders could not pick and choose which part of the process they would enforce. That is why an unbiased party was charged with investigating a complaint to gather and present the facts of the event as it actually occurred.

Participant 5's Response,

An effective leader would first make the complainant comfortable and allowed them to open up and express what occurred. After that they directed that individual to right resources to assist them. Some leaders would try their best to listen to the complainant and do their best and give them the advice they could. If the person felt comfortable with the leader they approached they would give them the details of the incident. From there, an effective leader would also work to remove the individual the complaint was against because the leader would not want to take the chance of another incident occurring and possibly happening to someone else. I don't think they were allowed to deviate from the established process was. The reason was if there was a missed step it would interfere with the outcome of the investigation. There were step by step rules for leaders to follow to help guide the process to an outcome. If there were no standardized processes to deal with those such things then the system would have been broken altogether. There was a lot that occurred to process each specific situation and when a person decided to file a complaint they had to comfortable knowing the system was going to work for them. The complainant didn't need a leader who would cut a corner and not direct them to a particular place that could help them because of their personal opinion. If the leader stuck to the guidelines than the process was implemented correctly.

Participant 6's Response,

Leaders were to make sure the victim had the care medically, mentally, and physically that they needed immediately. And not to dismiss any complaint they received because at that particular time they did not know the status or the extent of the injuries the victim had received. Now, some leaders in the past that I had dealt with had tried to dismiss some of the actions of the perpetrators because maybe they had known them because of the alleged perpetrator's rank or position; however, that meant that leader was just as guilty as the perpetrator. They were supposed to do what leaders were charged to do and that was handle that case according to the rules and regulations to protect that victim. Sometimes they got caught up into the situation because the alleged perpetrator was a leader or a friend of theirs so they would try to protect them; however, they were wrong in that sense they did not do their job of taking care of that victim. That's why leaders were not supposed to deviate from the guidelines, they could add to it but they're not supposed to take away from the established procedures.

Participant 7's Response,

Leaders must do a thorough job of fact finding before rushing to action. The worst thing a leader could do is rush to action without getting all of the details. Leaders must remain open-minded and neutral. Sometimes complaints come in and they are not founded and someone's career is affected. Other times founded complaints come in and they are not taken seriously and the victim is not taken care of in the way that's best for them. With having a system in place, leaders would know what

to do. The system assisted them because they did not get the option to blow off a complaint, believing that the complaint was not real, or allow them to put personal opinions in it. It assisted most leaders because they just didn't know what to do since they didn't deal with sexual misconduct events all of the time.

Participant 8's Response,

It was imperative to have informed, educated, and trained leaders who properly transmit the message of how they would like the see the organization act, or guidelines, and restrictions they would have the organization stay within. A clear sign is posting this information around the organization. Leaders at every level must be willing to enforce the policies around the organization. If not, the organization gets destroyed and no reporting would occur. Well, there's an old saying "You can add to but you can't take away from the regulations." There's a very limited amount of flexibility when it comes to dealing with sexual harassment and sexual assault cases. Basically, there's no deviation. I didn't think deviation from the standards was an option, but you had some leaders exercising their authority, but I didn't agree with it.

Participant 9's Response,

Once a complaint was made, proper procedures had to be followed. A good leader would try to get all of the facts and determined if the facts mirrored up to what the person was accusing. Once the information was gathered, an authorized investigator looked over the statements to decipher fact from fiction. Each unit should have a sexual misconduct coordinator who processed a complaint and sent

it to the next higher representative to continue the process to determine whether the complaint was punishable to detain an accused or if further investigating was warranted.

Participant 10's Response,

An effective leader's sexual assault/harassment decision making process as it pertained to sexual misconduct complaints began with reacting quickly (being timely), accessing the unit's policies, ensuring that the policies continued to address the reporting process. Leaders were also there for the victim during the entire process of reporting through to the prosecution process, if applicable.

Journaling. During my journaling, I observed every participant provided their perception of how knowledgeable leaders needed to be concerning sexual harassment and sexual assault to provide sexual misconduct victims with the appropriate guidance during their traumatic and emotional sexual encounter. The participants believed leaders must remain impartial and unbiased during the process and their decision making must reflect this so the individuals they supervise observe this behavior. Leaders decision making processes were expected to explicitly follow the established guidelines set forward by the military's policies, procedures, and reporting system or the processes leaders individually developed did not present the supervised individuals with contradictory behavior and discourage victims from reporting sexual misconduct incidents.

Historical documents. SHARP training incorporated "*sex signals*" and "*sex rules*" training along with scenarios where newly appointed officers applied leader decision making in response to different sexual harassment and sexual assault situations

(Department of Defense, 2016). Leaders ensure service members are not left alone to navigate the daunting process of reporting a sexual assault incident, while also supporting victims in their decision making process (Department of Defense, 2013). The subthemes investigation, cases, and evidence were described and discussed in the data analysis section.

Emergent Theme 3: Gender in the Workplace

The gender in the workplace theme emerged in Participants 1, 5, 6, and 7 interviews, journaling, and historical documents of the multiple data sources of the military's sexual misconduct reports (6 out of 12 [50%]). Gender in the workplace was referenced 52,316 times. Two subthemes for gender in the workplace emerged including the victim and accused. The subthemes occurred in the data ranged from 83% to 100% shown in Table10.

Table 10

Emergent Theme 3: Gender in the Workplace Setting

	Participant interviews / observations										Journaling	Historical documents	Percentage
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
Gender in the workplace	x				x	x	x				x	x	50%
Victim	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	100%
Accused	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	83%

Interviews. The participants provided numerous perceptions concerning gender in the workplace setting. No observations identified for this theme.

Participant 1's Response,

There was bias that may have come into place when a female complainant came to a leader and the accused was also in the leader's organization. If the accused was considered a hard worker and the complaint against him was not in their character, sometimes the initial thought was disbelief. That's why I felt that if a complaint was against another person in the organization the claim should have been filed outside of the organization so that bias was not a factor in the complaint process.

Participant 5's Response,

The challenge was people would immediately pick a side for the male or female, causing an imbalance in the office and an effective leader would notice this. If the supervision of the male or female was direct contact, that challenge was very hard at times. But a good leader would figure out a way to talk to their organization and the individuals involved to express that if an investigation was warranted that everyone had to allow the process to work. If it was indirect and not in the immediate area, that was a little easier to deal with because there was not a direct impact to the organization.

Participant 6's Response,

For a male soldier to say they did not know, it was kind of hard to believe the information was posted all over the military installation to include the library, gas station, post exchange, commissary, or chapel, to name a few. So, they could not use that as a defense. And also, ignorance of the law was still no excuse. Even

when you used to internet and went to any installation home pages, you could see

their sexual harassment and assault information, it was there too. The information

was out there. And even civilians could click on the information and get it.

Participant 7's Response,

I think there is a natural bias that leaders experience when a female soldier lodged

a complaint against one of their soldiers. Even if the finding came back

unfounded the soldier may be viewed in a different light. Leaders must continue

to give them fair reports and remember to treat the accused soldier the way they

did before the accusation was made. The trust for the solider came into question

once a complaint was filed against a soldier they directly supervise of whether the

soldier could be trusted again. Sexual misconduct goes against the values of the

military and how could a leader trust and supervise an individual who goes

against those values became the question.

Journaling. During my journaling, I noticed several of the participants

automatically identified the victim as a female and the accused as a male (4 out of 10

[40%]). Leaders who served in previous supervisory positions in the military have a hard

time understanding that men can also experience sexual misconduct events. This

perception by leaders may contribute to why male victims were and remain hesitant to

come forward and report sexual harassment or sexual assault encounters.

Historical documents. Research discovered by the Department of Defense has

consistently shown that sexual assault incidents are most likely to occur in workplace

settings where unhealthy social factors are allowed to ensue (Department of Defense,

2015). The unhealthy factors include gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and other problems that degrade or devalue individuals and their contributions in the workplace (Department of Defense, 2015). The SHARP program has developed training that focused on survivor testimonials, prevention methods, and identifying victim support services (Department of Defense, 2013). The implemented training provided integrated and gender-segregated training in a peer-to-peer model adjusted the attitude and behavioral challenges identified during training (Department of Defense, 2013). The subthemes victim and accused were described and discussed in the Data Analysis section.

Finally, I discuss the multiple data sources supporting the emergent themes for the reporting deterrent factors, hostile work environments, leader contributions, and social comparisons. I present the evidence that could add to the phenomenon related to reporting systems concerning to sexual misconduct and the information created by NVivo indicating the occurrence of themes and subthemes in the data. I used data triangulation for the data saturation to answer Research Question 2.

Emergent Theme 4: Reporting Deterrent Factors

The reporting deterrent factors theme emerged in 92% of the multiple data sources of the interviews, observations, journaling, and historical documents of the military's sexual misconduct reports. Reporting deterrent factors was referenced 2,424 times. One subtheme for reporting deterrent factors emerged which was the incident. The subtheme occurred in the data 75% shown in Table 11.

Table 11

Emergent Theme 4: Reporting Deterrent Factors

	Participant interviews / observations										Journaling	Historical documents	Percentage
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
Reporting deterrent factors	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	92%
Incident	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x		x	75%

Interviews. Numerous perceptions were provided by the participants concerning reporting deterrent factors. No observations identified for this theme.

Participant 1's Response,

The victim's reaction could be negative or positive depending on the nature of the situation, the victim's state of mind, the outcome of the situation, and who was involved in the situation. When the situation existed where the victim and accused were in the same unit and the reporting was unrestricted, there was no guarantee that the victim's identification would remain unknown. Since there were too many people involved in the process. Eventually there would be so many people aware, they may not know the details, but they would definitely know some type of event had taken place. So, I believe depending on how the situation was handled, especially if the person being accused did not get the punishment the victim felt they should have, then I did feel like the victim could have potentially felt like a disservice was done to them and the unit did not handle the situation properly. But at the end of the day the situation was left up to the system, the court, or the

law to determine guilt or innocence. But I do feel like because victims were traumatized with the event itself, the outcome of the situation could really affect how they viewed the organization, the actual person who took the complaint, or assisted them with the complaint. I felt if the policies and procedures were not communicated properly the victim's complaint would not be followed through properly. The person being accused would not be processed correctly and there would not be a positive outcome for the victim and the accused would continue with the negative sexual misconduct behavior with other people, and it could permit the negative behavior to occur in other places. So, I believe it was detrimental that a victim was provided the appropriate services that they needed. I think evidence was definitely one of the things that needed to be gathered in a timely manner so evidence would not be potentially lost. Leaders had to be educated on ensuring victims did not destroy possible evidence and the victims were taken to the appropriate places immediately following an incident so the processing occurred correctly and no information was forgotten. That could have been the difference between an accused person receiving the appropriate punishment. Educating the soldiers was key to ensuring the system did what it was allowed to do.

Participant 2's Response,

The victim's reaction can have a major impact. If the victim felt the command just simply white washed their complaint, that person could lose faith in the command to take care of them and their reaction could spill over to the other soldiers that

particular soldier impacted. Faulty investigations or people not making complaints would occur if people felt the unit would not investigate or would not believe their complaint. Soldiers tended not to mention those things if the organization did not communicate. It would not be a policy, just words written on a paper. Leaders had to be very careful what type of questions they asked the person who felt they were violated, because the leader should not have gotten personally involved in the system itself and allow the system to work. When leaders were informed of a possible sexual misconduct, their first action should have been to check on the well-being of the individual. The next thing was getting a victim to the right resources. Some leaders did not know the difference between sexual harassment or sexual assault. So, leaders would sometimes try to nip the situation in the bud when it's actually sexual assault.

Participant 3's Response,

If the decision goes in the victim's favor and the accused received the proper punishment, there would be no effect to the organization's operation. But, some of the soldiers might have a reaction to the punishment the accused soldier received because they may not have felt the incident was not fairly investigated. On the other hand, if the accused soldier was found innocent, the victim could have felt they were unfairly treated and complications could have arisen within the organization. If a disruption occurred, the best thing an organization could do was move one or both of the individuals from the unit to try to restore some type of normalcy for the victim, accused, and the organization. The outcome could be

devastating to the victim. The victim could go on a down-hill spiral because they did not fully understand the options available to them for reporting a sexual abuse. The military experiences high suicide rates when victims are not properly informed of the sexual harassment and sexual assault policies and procedures.

Participant 5's Response,

If the victim has an objective opinion to the decision, the leader would not be looked upon as an assist by the victim because the trust for that leader would be in jeopardy. Other individuals would look at how the investigation may have been poorly conducted and future complainants would not feel confident enough to file a complaint with that specific leader. If this occurs, then the system in itself is flawed. Complainants must feel comfortable enough in their leaders to approach them with sexual misconduct issues and concerns. The outcome would be that a lot of incidents would not be reported. The system wouldn't work and would be broken all around. There has to be some training because the information is all over. I don't see the inadequacy in the communication today as it was when I first came in the military, I don't remember it being as prevalent as it is now. Right now, there are all kinds of resources out there and the whole step by step complaint process that soldiers are privileged to. Now, if they did not have these things, the military would have complaints and sexual misconduct of any kind would go unreported because the soldiers wouldn't know what to do with it.

Participant 6's Response,

Depending on if the victim felt he or she received a fair treatment or that the

perpetrator received preferential treatment, then they might have felt they did not

receive justice. The outcome could have been disastrous. Most times what the

military did was separate the two parties often times by moving the perpetrator

out of the organization or the victim may have been moved to protect them from

the other individuals in the organization that may have known about what was

going on. So, I think either way people would gossip and spread rumors around

the organization, it was easier when the individuals were separated for the

command could take care of both parties without having a stigma on them.

Participant 7's Response,

If the victim reacts in a negative way and begins to lash out, spread rumors, or

says the accused got away with something, it brings down the morale, but I don't

think that it changes how the organization operates. There will definitely be a dark

cloud when everyone is trying to do their mission. People who do not have the

authorization of getting the information from an investigation would find out.

Then the victim's right is ultimately ignored.

Participant 8's Response,

You don't know, what you don't know. If a case was not handled properly, it

could destroy the trust in the chain of command. As well as the workplace

environment and the military as a whole. The climate of the organization could be

devastated. You would be surprised that there were still people who claimed to

not know how to file a complaint or process a complaint. The outcome is unresolved issues continued to fester within the organization and it poisons the organization.

Participant 9's Response, "People would not know that certain behaviors are considered sexual misconduct in nature until they were educated. When people are not aware of the standards, sexual misconduct events would often occur".

Participant 10's Response,

"If an organization does not adequately and timely communicate the policies, procedures, and reporting system for sexual harassment and sexual assault may negatively impact the organization's safety or morale".

Journaling. The participants presented several factors that may deter victims from reporting sexual misconduct events. One such factor was anonymity of victims: Participant 1 described the confidentiality of victims once a complaint was filed and Participant 7 noted the spreading of rumors following a filed complaint. Another factor was the handling of a victim or complaint: Participant 2 revealed there were instances when filed complaints were delayed and Participant 6 disclosed there were instances when victims were treated unfairly throughout the organization. An additional factor was the handling of an investigation: Participants 3, 5, and 8 revealed occurrences when complaints were not investigated fairly. The final factor occurred if the military's policies, procedures, and reporting system were not conveyed adequately: Participants 9 and 10 divulged when individuals were not properly educated on the standards of reporting sexual misconduct incidents, problems ensued in an organization.

Historical documents. Leaders understand deterrent factors that exist which could cause a victim to hesitate in reporting a devastating sexual misconduct event. The military has developed training consisting of four phases directing commanders to focus on three specific areas such as the deterrence of sexual assault, sexual harassment, and retaliation (Department of Defense, 2016). The areas consisted of leader engagement, responsible use of alcohol, and unit areas of responsibilities. The phases were: (a) Commanders analyze and assess their vulnerabilities in these areas; (b) develop measures and execute a plan that will deter sexual assault, sexual harassment, and retaliation; (c) share lessons learned with their peers; (d) and reassess and make the necessary changes to the deterrence measures in their plans (Department of Defense, 2016). The deterrent measures are designed to emphasize the consequences of perpetrating a sexual misconduct occurrence are so undesirable that the consequences inhibit potential offenders from acting out (Department of Defense, 2015). Two primary deterrent methods that were developed: the criminal justice system (professional/individual deterrence) and social acceptance (social deterrence; Department of Defense, 2015). The subtheme incident was described and discussed in the Data Analysis section.

Emergent Theme 5: Hostile Work Environments

The hostile work environments theme emerged in 100% of the multiple data sources of the interviews, observations, journaling, and historical documents of the military's sexual misconduct reports. Hostile work environments were referenced 9,304 times. Two subthemes for hostile work environments emerged including the retaliation

and abusive. The subthemes occurred in the data ranged from 17% to 83% shown in Table 12.

Table 12

Emergent Theme 5: Hostile Work Environments

	Participant interviews / observations										Journaling	Historical documents	Percentage
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
Hostile work environment	x		x	x		x				x	x	x	58%
Retaliation				x								x	17%
Abusive	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x	83%

Interviews. The participants provided numerous perceptions concerning hostile work environments.

Participant 1's Response,

Ineffective communication could send the wrong message to an organization. Policies and procedures would have been followed ineffectively and training would not have been incompliant. Those are just some of the things that stuck out to me if I knew a complaint was handled improperly. The first thing I was concerned with was what type of training was done, were people properly educated on how to report or process complaints. So, I think on the other side of the coin those were some of the things that could occur and the organization could be seen in a derogatory light and it would take a long time for the organization to recover. If a leader reported an incident to someone within the organization the

victim did not want to know, that could cause the victim to lose trust in the leader and shut completely down. Effective communication would ensure the accused did not get away with negative sexual misconduct behaviors.

Participant 3's Response,

Something has to be done to improve the communication of the policies and procedures. Individuals who contemplate committing heinous sexual acts must be informed that type of behavior will not be tolerated in the military. And the best practice for leaders is to continue to talk about the hard issues with their soldiers concerning sexual misconduct and not shy away from the topic.

Participant 4's Response,

When information is not properly shared within an organization, the commander and first sergeant could have received a relief of cause and the next higher commander, the battalion commander, could have been put on notice. I have seen this happen because these policies are not only coming from the leaders but also the Pentagon. For all commanders, sexual harassment and sexual assault victims was their number one priority.

Participant 6's Response,

An ineffective communication flow would hurt an organization. If leaders didn't communicate, it's almost like a cancer cell. Because the behavior of no communication could spread and people were not talking, keeping secrets, and not talking about what was going on. That just gives the means and opportunity for things to manifest and get worst. So, it did not help the organization to thrive.

If there was an issue and the command was not aware of it, they didn't have an

opportunity to fix it. That was an epic fail for a command. Open door policies

should be communicated to everyone throughout an organization.

Participant 10's Response, "If an organization does not have an effective

communication network, the organization's ineffectiveness could interfere with the

victim's safety and affect the legitimacy of the reporting procedure".

Observations. An expression was noted in Question #15: Is there anything else

that you would like to add for the purpose of this study that I did not ask that you think

may be helpful? Participant 4 made visible hand gestures while providing a response for

this Interview Question. Participant 4 was excited about providing an additional

suggestion pertaining to the topic of sexual harassment and sexual assault in the military.

Journaling. While journaling for this emergent theme for hostile work

environments, I noted each participant referenced failed communication practices

contributed to the existence of this type of work environment. Leaders may combat

hostile atmospheres in the workplace by ensuring constant communication throughout an

organization occurs. Leaders must develop effective communication channels within an

organization to ensure information flows smoothly.

Historical documents. In Fiscal Year 2013, military leaders were mandated to

conduct a comprehensive visual inspection of all workplaces and common areas to ensure

they were free from materials that created a degrading, hostile, or offensive work

environment (Department of Defense, 2013). The inspections enhanced awareness of

questionable offensive material (i.e., health magazines, cartoons, or jokes that

emphasized the importance of promoting an environment of dignity and respect;

Department of Defense, 2013). Although unit leadership personnel were responsible for

mandating their organizations were periodically swept for offensive or degrading

material, individuals were responsible for monitoring and eliminating work spaces of

materials and behaviors that were not in line with the military's core values as

professionals (Department of Defense, 2013). Leaders strived to support established

policies designed to create and sustain safe environments free of sexual misconduct

(Department of Defense, 2013). The subthemes retaliation and abusive were described

and discussed in the Data Analysis section.

Emergent Theme 6: Leader Contributions

The leader contributions theme emerged in 92% of the multiple data sources of

the interviews, observations, journaling, and historical documents of the military's sexual

misconduct reports. Leader contributions were referenced 318 times. Three subthemes for

leader contributions emerged including the command, training, and support. The

subthemes occurred in the data ranged from 33% to 67% shown in Table 13.

Table 13

Emergent Theme 6: Leader Contributions

	Participant interviews / observations										Journaling	Historical documents	Percentage
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
Leader contribution	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	92%
Command	x	x				x		x	x			x	50%
Training	x		x		x	x	x	x				x	67%
Support	x		x	x								x	33%

Interviews. Numerous perceptions were provided by the participants concerning leader contributions.

Participant 1's Response,

Training was continuously being done in regards to sexual misconduct. The month of April was recognized as SHARP month and at that time extensive training was conducted throughout the month the ensure soldiers were informed and educated on the proper ways to report and how to notice the signs of sexual misconduct. To ensure individuals did not receive improper information. There was training conducted all the time. leaders should have candid conversations with their soldiers. There was nothing that stated leaders had to wait for formal training to ensure soldiers received the information. There was counseling leaders had to receive according to their rank on a monthly or quarterly basis. Opportunities were available for leaders to ensure soldiers were aware of the SHARP program and what it meant to them. Leaders should constantly maximize the opportunities available to inform soldiers, especially the individuals that were new to the military and came from different backgrounds. It was important for individuals to be informed that certain behaviors that may have been acceptable where they came from on the civilian side would not be tolerated in the military. Another method that was used was to have outside instructors come in to provide training in the unit so that soldiers could hear the information presented by different sources. The outside representative could be an effective tool for leader.

Participant 2's Response,

Leaders should make an effort to let soldiers know they actually care about their well-being. This can occur through team-building exercises, morale functions, or anything they can do to keep the unit moving in a positive way. Leaders can also include soldiers in the process of developing activities that would help restore the morale of the unit.

Participant 3's Response,

Leaders would take into consideration all of the information available concerning a complaint and follow the steps of the reporting system to ensure the information was properly distributed to the appropriate agency. The first thing leaders could do is ensure soldiers are thoroughly informed of the entire reporting process for sexual misconduct.

Participant 4's Response,

Leaders can bring in outside counselors who can provide one-on-one or groups sessions. The counselors are also trained to inform the victim of the support options available to them. Classes are given and posters are put up around the unit. But everyone knows it is taught day in and day out. Chaplains and counselors are provided for individuals who chose not to speak to anyone within the unit. Everyone is also informed that they can go to someone outside of the unit to file a complaint if that would make them feel more comfortable.

Participant 5's Response,

Team-building activities can be used just to get individuals comfortable enough to

talk to each other. Leaders must be creative nowadays to find ways to get soldiers attention and open up. I have seen in the past where people come in and put on plays of a misconduct event to gain the attention of the individuals of an affected organization and then pull a double whammy and disclose that was the sexual misconduct event that occurred within their organization. The military is always trying to develop ways to change up the training and enlighten people of how to deal with certain things that occur that was inappropriate. Leaders continued to use training to stress upon everyone if sexual misconduct happens this is what will happen to you. So, the resources are out there and available and the leadership has to make it a priority of ensuring the information is shared with everyone. Leaders must also encourage victims to come forward if something happened to them that was illegal or immoral, report it and do not worry about getting shunned or in trouble. Installing confidence in potential victims is essential to making the program work.

Participant 6's Response,

The command needs to be involved, lead by example, show good faith, and build trust. Leaders cannot think just because they are someone's supervisor that trust is automatically given. By virtue of their rank, there's going to be some trust. I have a saying that the mouth will say anything, but behavior does not lie. If individuals see a leader displaying the behavior that they are talking about, they will develop that trust. I think it was highly important that the information was communicated to the lowest level. Everybody should be encouraged to communicate. Now the

military has a new slogan "See Something, Say Something." Even if you think it

may not be anything, people are still encouraged to say something. Because if you

feel something may not be right, you know what right looks like. Even if it's the

lowest ranking person and they may feel scared to say something to their leaders,

they can get the word out by placing something in a drop box and report it

anonymously.

Participant 7's Response,

The biggest thing leaders can do it address the elephant in the room of the sexual

misconduct event and not try to pretend it didn't happen. Informing the

individuals in the unit that there is a problem and everyone must work together to

fix it. Including the soldiers in the solution process shows that the leaders' value

their opinion of how things look at their level and what would help to eliminate

the problem. When the techniques are developed, it is very important for leaders

to implement them so the information reaches everyone.

Participant 8's Response,

Being as transparent as a leader can without exposing the complainant or accused,

an event that big, people in the organization are going to know. They may not

know the details but they'll know something. Keeping down the rumor mill is

important by communicating frequently and effectively with the organization

about what is going on. How the unit handles those types of events will help to

bring the morale up. It is extremely important that communication is fluent

between any of the sexual assault representatives, program coordinators, victim

advocates, and any representatives within an organization to ensure that everyone remains informed and trained so victims receive the best possible care available. Training is conducted and implementing changes to the policies immediately to deter and eliminate future digressions.

Participant 10's Response,

The best communication practice that leaders could use to ensure that everyone within the organization was informed and aware of the policies, procedures, and reporting system as it pertained to sexual harassment/assault was to conduct surveys and organizational climate assessments. It was very important and essential to have an effective flow of information through communication regarding the reporting system for sexual misconduct in an organization to ensure that the complaint was being processed in a timely manner and to address any safety issues as it related to the victim. Both surveys and organizational climate assessments were communication practices that could be developed and employed to maintain or restore morale within an organization concerning sexual misconduct.

Observations. An expression was noted by Participant 6 who made a visible shift in posture while discussing the contributions leaders make in the workplace. Participant 6 also displayed an excitement in her voice during the same discussion. Each participant, having been a previous leader in the military, offered essential information concerning the contributions leaders can provide to an organization.

Journaling. While journaling for this emergent theme for leader contributions, I noted each participant identified things leaders could do to restore morale within in a unit that has been plagued with the unpleasant behavior of sexual misconduct. The creative ideas leaders come up with may only work in their organizational locations due to the available resources. Leaders must continue to try restoring a morale in an organization affected with sexual discourse.

Historical documents. Leaders continued to create a supportive environment for victims to report sexual harassment or sexual assault (Department of Defense, 2017). Efforts for developing the environment were required on the part of leaders to address the negative perceptions about training and other aspects of the SHARP program (Department of Defense, 2017). A major perception was participants felt that previous sexual behaviors were minimized and not taken seriously, such as crude comments and inappropriate jokes (Department of Defense, 2017). In addition, the military developed and distributed a learning program for future soldiers that could be accessed and used at recruiting stations (Department of Defense, 2013). The subthemes command, training, and support were described and discussed in the Data Analysis section.

Emergent Theme 7: Social Comparisons

The social comparisons theme emerged in 100% of the multiple data sources of the interviews, observations, journaling, and historical documents of the military's sexual misconduct reports. Social comparisons were referenced 760 times. One subtheme for social comparison emerged that was the offense. The subtheme occurred in the data was 17% shown in Table 14.

Table 14

Emergent Theme 7: Social Comparisons

	Participant interviews / observations										Journaling	Historical documents	Percentage
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
Social comparisons	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	100%
Offense					x							x	17%

Interviews. The participants provided numerous perceptions concerning social comparisons.

Participant 1's Response,

External centers provided individuals an opportunity to seek assistance and provide a little more assistance than what the military allowed. The centers provided victims with a little more confidentiality to the soldier, so the soldier was not on the base running into people they may know when they sought assistance from services such as behavioral health. The confidentiality the services outside of post provided soldiers was a phenomenal resource for victims. The victims could receive care under the memorandum of understanding for hospital support and other numerous resources. This study is pretty good. I have some opinions about the program itself and how it protects the victim. But, we know that are some cases where people misuse the system. So, I think that one day it would be great if someone took the time to do a study on the cases out there, and it may not be enough to warrant a study, people who may have been falsely accused because we know that happens also. The study could be used to

determine how effective a sexual misconduct program really is. It would be interesting to find out how many people who are properly trained about a program used the information to try to gain leverage over someone with a false claim. A false claim could be the difference between some receiving a prison sentence or just having their character questioned.

Participant 2's Response,

As far as the social implications, there was this stigma out there the military's going to cover up anything like this, more so than publicize it for the public to see. The biggest social impact was for every one report that the military shared with the public or requested outside aid, there were several the military hid. There were plenty of outside agencies available to help victims maybe recover faster. During my time as a leader I kept the complaints in house and did not use outside resources. I recently attended a SHARP class as a civilian this year a couple of months ago, and the instructor mentioned something about false reporting. The military has begun to do something that I thought they should have done years ago is where false reports are being recognized instead of just saying a reported incident did not occur and everybody just go back to work. That process being added to the loop also restores morale and will help people get back to normal. I always felt that was something the military did not do because they were afraid of looking like they were attacking the victim of a sexual abuse so they never addressed the issue if the complaint was false and someone was just lying just to get their way or to hurt someone. But now according to the SHARP instructor this

is something the military and government as a whole is now taking into account

the false accusations made against people and that to me was a big thing, almost a

totally different branch of what sexual misconduct was when I was on active duty.

Participant 3's Response,

I think a lot of social things that come into play like social media, sexting, and

other things available to soldiers. There's so much that leaders have to stay on top

of. Sometimes soldiers were considered like a leader's child because the concern

was just as genuine with trying to steer soldiers away from danger areas.

Participant 4's Response, "The social implications of sexual misconduct should

not be a consideration as military leaders process complaints".

Participant 5's Response,

Everything (sexual misconduct events) happening in other industries plays a part

in the military as well. The #MeToo movement that is going on right now is going

to involve some military members because the military is not oblivious to fact that

there are some incidents that are not reported because some of the accused are in

senior leadership positions. The social improprieties that go on exist in the

military and bleeds over. So, a good leader acknowledges in their training what

sexual misconduct that is occurring in other environments. I believe the sexual

misconduct occurring outside of the military is also occurring within the military.

Not talking about the issues is not the answer. Something to look at is how sexual

misconduct differs gender to gender. We have ventured into a time within the

military where certain transgender sexualities are acceptable and that's a whole

other demographic of questions that may come to light. The military is going into

another realm of things when it comes to sexual misconduct because before the

focus was mainly on females. The concern may shift to whether a transgender

individual will feel comfortable reporting a sexual misconduct event.

Participant 6' Response,

Back when I was in the military the external factors were not a consideration at

that time the military was leading the way for sexual misconduct. I still believe

the military should set the example because the military is a different breed. The

military has to set the standards because we are the leaders of the country and

must enforce the standards and the military standards have to be far more

stringent than any other commercial industry. The military leaders should not take

external social implications into consideration because the military produces the

highest caliber of individuals.

Participant 7's Response,

The #MeToo movement has to affect military leaders. The military is made up of

citizens in the community, social events, and the social media definitely affect the

processing of sexual misconduct events in the military. The continuity of

processing sexual misconduct complaints was the main thing I noticed was

missing during my time as a leader in the military. The job as a sexual misconduct

representative for most people was an additional duty and the important program

would not receive an individual's full attention. The program is so serious and

critical that it deserves an individual's full attention.

Participant 8's Response,

I don't think social implications are considered. Lifestyle practices such as the LGBT community has forced some of the policies to change within the military. The military was slow to the acceptance or changing of any of the regulatory guidelines. Harassment is harassment and assault is assault. So, I wouldn't necessarily say that social implications, but I would think cultural changes have influenced the way the military deals with policies as it relates to sexual misconduct. If you talk to some females who served in the military a while back and they will tell you that sexual misconduct has been going on a long time in the military and it just wasn't being reported. No one should be forced to do certain types of favors, being harassed, or sexually harassed to progress or advance in an organization. I appreciate you doing this particular study.

Participant 9's Response,

Most leaders would look at current sexual misconduct events that were occurring inside and outside of the military and use them during training events. Things about the occurrences would be discussed such as whether the victim and perpetrator knew each other, were they in a relationship, was it an isolated incident, was there too much horse playing going on, and so on. Presenting different scenarios allowed individuals to see what type of misconduct events can easily end up as a negative event. There are always improvements that can be made because there's no place for sexual misconduct in the military or society. What needs to continue is educating everyone that sexual behaviors will not be

tolerated in any environment.

Participant 10's Response,

I would like to say that I believe that commanders should not be allowed to
address sexual assault or sexual harassment complaints. The complaints should go
to a separate identity where the commander's biases or politics cannot be a factor
in the decision making process on how to treat the victim or the alleged assailant.
Although some leaders do not want to be honest, some leader's biases, their
personal relationship with the soldiers, and military politics affect the processing
of sexual misconduct complaints in the military.

Observations. Question #8 sparked multiple expressions from the participants:
What are the social implications (external factors) leaders consider when processing
sexual misconduct complaints in the military? Participants 1, 2, 4, and 10 displayed
similar facial expressions of reflecting when referring to the positive support victims
received from agencies outside of the military channels. The same participants also
showed admiration when referencing the various outside medical and mental health
agencies that supported military personnel. Participants 5, 6, 7, and 8 displayed eagerness
when comparing sexual misconduct in the military to the #MeToo movement.

Interview Question #15 inspired various expressions. Question #15: Is there
anything else that you would like to add for the purpose of this study that I did not ask
that you think may be helpful? Every participant made a visible shift in their posture and
an excitement was in their voice whether to provide recommendations for additional
studies concerning the topic from Participants 1, 5, 7, and 8, or hand gestures while

providing their response from Participants 3, 5, 8, and 10, or stuttered responses from Participants 2, 3, and 9.

Journaling. My journaling for this emergent theme included the observation from Interview Question #8. The participants were very helpful in sharing their experiences with dealing with outside agencies from the military who provided phenomenal support to sexual misconduct victims and advice for additional studies to combine with and enhance my current study. Participant 1 shared outside medical and mental agencies outside of the military provided victims with privacy they would not have received going through the military channels. Participant 2 disclosed the military still has a stigma that sexual misconduct transgressions are covered up. Participant 7 felt soldiers designated as the sexual response coordinator for a unit could not provide the sufficient amount of time required to properly do the task since was an additional duty on top of their other daily responsibilities. Participant 10 strongly believed the interview process of complaints should be taken out of the hands of the first line supervisor due to the possibility of bias for the victim or accused. Participant 4 and 6 strongly disagreed that external factors should not be considered by the military when dealing with sexual misconduct incidents.

My journaling for Question #15 included the external factors the participants thought were an influence to the military which included social media (Participant 3), #MeToo (Participants 5 and 7), and the LGBT community (Participant 8). Participant 8 described these influences as cultural changes that forced the military to review and update the sexual misconduct policies, procedures, and reporting system.

Historical documents. In Fiscal Year 2016, the Department of Defense began the development of the 2017-2021 sexual assault prevention plan of action (Department of Defense, 2016). The goal of the prevention efforts was to eventually decrease the number of individuals who perpetrated sexual misconduct along with the number of individuals who experienced an incident (Department of Defense, 2016). Diverse prevention approaches aimed to reduce the factors that made a sexual crime more likely while increasing the factors that protected people from harm (Department of Defense, 2016). Comprehensive prevention strategies addressed factors at every level of the social environment, including individuals, relationships, the local community, and society as a whole (Department of Defense, 2016). Victims today often scan the environment for information, assistance, and resources soon after being sexually assaulted (Department of Defense, 2015). In Fiscal Year 2016, the military established a safe helpline providing an online presence and expanding into social media (Department of Defense, 2015). The social media campaign communicated the available victim resources and increased awareness with the goal of assisting victims in their decision to file a sexual assault report (Department of Defense, 2015). The subtheme offense was described and discussed in the Data Analysis section.

Summary of Emergent Themes

I did not identify any discrepant cases or nonconfirming data for the themes that did not meet the selection criteria for the study that included retired, senior military leaders, in the position for over 5 years, and who had processed a sexual misconduct complaint. I discovered seven emerging during the literature review and used the

collected data sources to confirm the themes (see Chapter 2, p. 51). The findings of this

study provided a milieu for future research. A summary of the findings included

emergent themes, subthemes, answers to the research questions, and areas for future

research shown in Table 15.

Table 15

Summary of findings

Research Question 1: In what ways does the military's reporting system influence leaders' decision making processes?			
Emergent Themes	Subthemes	Answer to Research Question	Future Research
Reporting process	Program Prevention Restricted Unrestricted	The reporting system provided step-by-step guidelines leaders should not deviate from. Leaders were not allowed to pick and choose which complaints they would process. Leaders were not allowed to advise victims of which reporting to choose.	Determining how many cases have been lost when a deviation of the guidelines occurred.
Leader decision making processes	Investigation Cases Evidence	Unit policies must continue to coincide with the military's reporting process. The guidance from the reporting system assisted leaders from instilling biases or personal opinions.	Compare how the investigation of cases have evolved over time.
Gender in the workplace	Victim Accused	Leaders must ensure the victim and accused are treated fairly.	Identify how sexual incidents differ by gender.
Research Question 2: How important is it for leaders to develop and implement an effective flow of information through communication channels regarding the reporting system for sexual misconduct in an organization?			
Reporting deterrent factors	Incident	Victims of a sexual event must understand their safety is the priority when deciding to report.	A study of the people falsely accused.
Hostile work environments	Retaliation Abusive	Everyone in an organization must know retribution against a victim or complainant will not be tolerated.	Discover the best practices for improvement.
Leader contributions	Command Training Support	Training events provide a phenomenal venue for leaders to educate individuals of the policies, procedures, and reporting system	A look into how training be improved in combat zones.
Social comparisons	Offense	The military has remained mindful of the social movements (#MeToo and LGBT) and updated policies.	Compare the policies for the military and social industries

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the field test, research setting, demographics, data collection, and the data analysis processes for my study. To answer the research questions, I used the qualitative, descriptive, multiple, case study methodology and multiple data sources that included interviews, observations, journaling, and historical documents (i.e., policies, procedures, regulations, published sexual harassment, and assault statistical reports). The participants for this study were selected through purposeful sampling. The sampling consisted of 10 retired, military leaders, who served in a senior leadership position of a military organization for over 5 years, and processed any sexual misconduct complaint.

I provided evidence of trustworthiness of the study results using data saturation and data triangulation of all the data sources to answer the research questions. I obtained data saturation by collecting all the data from the data sources: interviews, observations, journaling, and historical documents that included policies, procedures, regulations, published sexual harassment, and assault statistical reports until no new themes or patterns emerged. I used reflective journaling during the data collection process to maintain neutrality as the researcher. The data triangulation of the data sources provided rich, thick information that could be used in future studies to replicate this study design. An analysis and interpretation of the study results was presented in Table 15 (p. 170) with the information that could add to the phenomenon relating to the reporting system for sexual harassment and sexual assault.

I was able to answer the research questions by using the information provided by the participants. The information from the participants was of their perceptions of the ways a military's reporting system could have influenced the decision making processes of leaders. The participants also described the importance of an effective flow of information through communication channels within an organization.

In Chapter 5, I will provide a discussion, conclusions, and recommendations based on the findings of my study. The details include an interpretation of findings, limitation of the study, and recommendations. The implications of the study and conclusions completed Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive, multiple case study was to explore the ways a reporting system influenced the decision making processes of leaders and the importance of a fluent information flow through communication channels regarding the reporting system for sexual misconduct within an organization. The qualitative method affords an opportunity for the exploration of the perceptions and views of the leaders pertaining to a specific phenomenon (Maxwell, 2013) and the case study design offers flexibility (Hyett et al., 2014) while allowing the use of multiple data collection methods from both qualitative and quantitative paradigms (Lalor et al., 2013) of the military's reporting system. The essential benefit of qualitative case studies is they allow the researcher to reach a deeper understanding of critical instances of a phenomenon (Yin, 2014a) and *how* or *why* they occur (Simmons & Parks-Yancy, 2014). The objective of this study was to explore the military reporting system's influence in leaders' decision making processes and the importance of communicating the reporting system for sexual misconduct within an organization. The fundamental phenomenon grounding this study was the influence a reporting system may have on a leaders' decision making processes. Information of the ways a military reporting system influence leaders' decision making processes has been missing from the scientific knowledge in the field relating to sexual misconduct reporting systems. This information is important so leaders can improve their decision making processes to encourage victims of a sexual misconduct event to seek help and self-report.

I used multiple data sources in this study, including semistructured interviews; observations; journaling; and historical documents such as policies, procedures, regulations, and published sexual harassment and assault statistical reports. While using social media and purposeful sampling, I recruited 10 leaders who were retired military leaders and had served in a senior leadership position of a military organization for over 5 years and processed any sexual misconduct complaint. An interview guide (see Appendix B) was developed with 15 open-ended questions based on my review of the literature relating to the military's sexual harassment and sexual assault reporting systems, policies, and procedures. I conducted the interviews and observations using FaceTime by telephone to maintain privacy for the participants. Reflective journaling assisted me in remaining neutral and unbiased. From the interviews, I obtained in-depth information from the leaders for cross-case analysis. I also analyzed historical documents for data triangulation of the information to answer the research questions and contribute to the trustworthiness of the study results. Data saturation was achieved once all the available data from the interviews, observations, journaling, and historical documents were gathered.

In my analysis during the literature review, I identified seven emergent themes: reporting process, leader decision making processes, gender in the workplace setting, reporting deterrent factors, hostile work environments, leader contributions, and social comparisons. My analysis of the data sources identified 16 subthemes: four subthemes were associated with reporting process including program, prevention, restricted, and unrestricted; three subthemes were associated with leader decision making processes

including investigation, cases, and evidence; two subthemes were associated with gender in the workplace setting including victim and accused; one subtheme was associated with reporting deterrent factors including incident; two subthemes were associated with hostile work environments including retaliation and abusive; three subthemes were associated with leader contributions including command, training, and support; and one subtheme was associated with social comparisons including offense.

The leader responses to Research Question 1 concerning the ways a reporting system influenced the decision making processes of leaders were as follows: the military's reporting system provided step-by-step guidelines leaders should not deviate from; leaders were not allowed to "pick and choose" which complaints to process; leaders were not allowed to advise victims of reporting options to choose; unit policies must continue to coincide with the military's reporting process; the guidance from the reporting system assisted leaders from instilling biases or personal opinions; and leaders must ensure the victim and accused are treated fairly. The leader responses to Research Question 2 on the importance of a fluent information flow through communication channels regarding the reporting system for sexual misconduct within an organization were as follows: victims of a sexual event must understand their safety is the priority when deciding to report; everyone in an organization must know retribution against a victim or complainant will not be tolerated; training events provide a phenomenal venue for leaders to educate individuals of the policies, procedures, and reporting system for sexual misconduct in the military; and the military has remained mindful of the social movements (i.e., #MeToo and LGBT) and updated policies to reflect them.

In this chapter, I will provide a discussion, conclusion, and recommendations based on the findings of this study. The details will include my interpretation of the findings, the limitations of the study, and my recommendations. The implications of the study and conclusions will complete the chapter.

Interpretation of Findings

In this section, I will discuss how the findings detailed in Chapter 4 confirmed, disconfirmed, or extended the body of knowledge related to the military's reporting system pertaining to sexual harassment and sexual assault. This will be accomplished by comparing the findings with the peer-reviewed literature that I described in Chapter 2. I will analyze and interpret the study results using the conceptual framework, data, findings, and scope of the study.

The research questions for this study were as follows:

Research Question 1: In what ways does the military's reporting system influence leaders' decision making processes?

Research Question 2: How important is it for leaders to develop and implement an effective flow of information through communication channels regarding the reporting system for sexual misconduct in an organization?

The findings of the study included the reporting process, leader decision making processes, gender in the workplace setting, reporting deterrent factors, hostile work environments, leader contributions, and social comparisons.

The findings from my study aligned to previous research such as those of Holland et al. (2014) who disclosed inadequate sexual misconduct training may leave victims

unsure of their rights and options as well as potential leaders (i.e., commanding officers) unsure of how to process the situation. Several themes emerged including the analysis of the availability of information on reporting, knowledge of resources, and effectiveness of reducing and preventing sexual misconduct (Holland et al., 2014). Breger (2014) revealed that gendered norms and implicit biases play a role in cultures condoning violence against women; in a society where women are considered lesser, and this idea trickles down into the norms and biases of the workplace.

Research Question #1

The findings from my study provided a thorough description of the leader's perceptions of the influence the military's reporting system had on leaders' decision making processes. The influences included the reporting process, leader decision making processes, and gender in the workplace setting. The input by the leaders was compelling and showed that each leader experienced diverse occurrences while serving in a leadership role and dealing with the same phenomenon.

The findings from this study are in agreement with previous research by the Department of Defense (2016b) that found that numerous reasons existed deterring victims from reporting sexual misconduct incidents. The reasons included wanting to forget about it and move on, not wanting more people to know about the assault, or feeling shamed or embarrassed (Department of Defense, 2016b). An additional reporting deterrent identified was that victims may be labeled as disloyal to an organization (Tseng, 2014).

A supportive environment is provided by the military for reporting sexual harassment or sexual assault, but further efforts are required to address the negative perceptions about training and other aspects of the program (Department of Defense, 2017). Four subthemes emerged from the reporting process data: (a) program, (b) prevention, (c) restricted, and (d) unrestricted. These findings aligned with those of Castro et al. (2015) that a service member filing a restricted complaint after a sexual misconduct opts for confidentiality in order to receive medical care and other supportive services without involving the military chain of command or law enforcement. An unrestricted complaint ensures the unit leadership and law enforcement are notified of a victim's sexual occurrence in sufficient detail, so a formal criminal investigation begins (Castro et al., 2015). Unfortunately, if the victim tells another service member who then discusses the incident with a leader or anyone in the chain of command, confidentially is forfeited and a formal investigation is automatically initiated (Castro et al., 2015).

When leaders develop a better cognitive understanding of the issues and perspectives, they improve their decision making processes (Hoandră, 2017). Three subthemes emerged from the leader decision making processes data: (a) investigation, (b) cases, and (c) evidence. These findings aligned with those of Street et al. (2013) who found evidence that male and female victims experience similar sexual harassment and sexual assault stressors in combat zones. The sexual misconduct cases cannot be successfully processed by the military without knowing the specific information gathered during the investigation and collected evidence (Department of Defense, 2016b).

Military service members represent a wide cross-section of the adult population in the United States and the buildup, men and women from various cultures, is a tradition of stereotypical gender role and male bonding norms (Harris & Firestone, 2010). Because of the male bonding, women were often excluded and made to feel they were intruding in the group solidarity (Harris & Firestone, 2010). In the findings of this study, I identified two subthemes from the gender in the workplace setting data: (a) the victim and (b) the accused. The findings aligned with those of Richards et al. (2014) who found that when universities fail to establish clear policies and procedures for faculty members defining consensual sexual relationships and the potential consequences of engaging in such behaviors with students, the students are placed at risk of being victimized as well as being uninformed regarding their rights. Garcia-Moreno et al. (2015) revealed macro level economic, social, and political factors combined with variables at the community and individual levels predict an individual's likelihood of being victimized or perpetrating abuse.

The significance of the findings from my study both confirmed and added to the body of knowledge relating to the reporting system for sexual harassment and sexual assault. Leaders described their perceptions of the military's reporting system based on their experience with the reporting process, leader decision making processes, and gender in the workplace setting. The findings aligned with my conceptual framework, that connected reporting systems with the actions of Freire's dialogical pedagogy theory and the leadership decision making theory. Freire's (1970) dialogical pedagogy theory explained alienating human beings from their own decision making causes an individual

to lose objectivity. The leadership decision making theory (Heller, 1992) helps provide an understanding of how decisions and can be used to help individuals in leadership positions to make better decisions.

Research Question #2

The findings from this study also provided a description of the leader's experiences dealing with the communication channels for the military's sexual misconduct reporting system. The communication included reporting deterrent factors, hostile work environments, leader contributions, and social comparisons. The leaders appeared enthusiastic during the semistructured interviews, and their responses were well thought out.

The findings from this study are in agreement with previous research by Hassan and Wright (2014) who found that ethical leaders flourished when employing personal actions and interpersonal relationships while using two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision making. Sexual misconduct may be efficiently reduced through training when leaders use communication and conflict resolution skills (Kvas & Seljak, 2014). The two-way communication from leaders may persuade subordinate employees to participate in the training sessions and ask clarifying questions to ensure they understand how the sexual misconduct program works.

When protection measures against retaliation for filing a sexual misconduct complaint are missing, this deterrent factor reduces an employee's ability to enforce victims' rights against harassment (Grossman, 2015). The subtheme incident emerged from the reporting deterrent factors data. The findings aligned with those of Patrie (2015)

who revealed victims are often reluctant to report sexual attacks for reasons including beliefs that nothing would be done or reporting an incident would negatively impact their careers. Additional reporting deterrent factors were described by Balogh et al. (2003) who discovered when victims who labeled their experience as sexual misconduct were blamed more for the incident than victims who did not label their experience or victims who reported an incident were regarded as less trustworthy than victims who did not report.

A hostile work environment may not always be defined as that of simple teasing, offhand comments, and isolated incidents to require discriminatory changes in the terms and conditions of employment (Chan & Kleiner, 2001). Sexual misconduct may be exhibited in the creation of a hostile work environment by bringing inappropriate magazines to work, displaying inappropriate materials on the job, objectifying other individuals, and making comments about body parts (Ross, 2013). Two subthemes emerged from the hostile work environments data: (a) retaliation and (b) abusive. The findings aligned with those of Van De Griend and Messias (2014) that included if a victim files a report of harassment or aggression in the workplace it may result in retaliation, lower job satisfaction, and increased psychological distress. An environment must be hostile and abusive to both an objective person and the actual victim in order to be actionable; therefore, if the victim finds the environment hostile and abusive but an objective and reasonable person would not, the conduct is not actionable (Chan & Kleiner, 2001).

When changes result from interacting interventions and networks, it can be difficult to determine the individual contributions and impacts made by each leader associated with the network or program (Wall, 2013). Added benefits of including leaders in the design and planning phase enhances their commitment, ownership, and an improved understanding of the aims and challenges pertaining to an organizational program (Wall, 2013). Three subthemes emerged from the leader contributions data: (a) command, (b) training, and (c) support. The findings aligned with the findings of Holland et al. Both studies, Holland et al. (2014) and mine disclosed the coordination and implementation of the military's sexual misconduct programs largely relies on commanders and coordinators. Sexual misconduct training is provided to senior and junior leaders; military culture and hierarchy did not encourage junior trainees to ask clarifying questions or share their opinions (Holland et al., 2014).

Social system personnel (i.e., doctors or police officers) underestimate the impact they are may have on a victim and the ways their actions and statements may be confusing or distressing (Holland et al., 2014). The findings of my study disclosed the subtheme offense emerged from the social comparisons data. The findings aligned with those of Schmid's research. Schmid's (2010) findings revealed Congress and the Department of Defense address military sexual misconduct through training, victim response, and changes to the military's sexual offenses statute. The military's mandate of relocating most service members every 2 to 3 years makes it more difficult to identify perpetrators, especially those who commit more than one offense (Castro et al., 2015).

The significance of the findings from my study both confirmed and added to the body of knowledge relating to the communication of the military's sexual misconduct reporting system. Leaders described their perceptions of the military's communication of the reporting system based on their experience with the reporting deterrent factors, hostile work environments, leader contributions, and social comparisons. The findings aligned with my conceptual framework, which connected communication channels with the actions of Bandura's social cognitive theory in cultural context. Bandura's (2002) social cognitive theory in cultural context explained two-way communication occurred between cultural exchanges, societies influence each other through communication by word or image, military conquests, and colonizing expeditions. The findings from my study provided a thorough description of the leader's perceptions from dealing with the communication channels of the military's sexual misconduct reporting system based on their experience with the reporting deterrent factors, hostile work environments, leader contributions, and social comparisons.

In summary, the interpretation of the findings of my study described leader's' perceptions dealing with the military's reporting system based on their experience with the reporting process, leader decision making processes, and gender in the workplace setting. The leaders also discussed the importance of communicating the reporting system within an organization from their experience with the reporting deterrent factors, hostile work environments, leader contributions, and social comparisons. The emergent themes confirmed by the leaders identified additional subthemes. The influences of the reporting system included program, prevention, restricted, unrestricted, investigation, cases,

evidence, victim, and accused. The importance of communicating the reporting system included incident, retaliation, abusive, command, training, support, and offense. The strategy to identify influences and communicating processes of a sexual misconduct reporting system checklist is a product from my study of reporting system influences, activities, and actions shown in Table 16.

Table 16

Strategy to Identify the Influences and Communicating Processes of a Sexual Misconduct Reporting System Checklist

Reporting system	Activities	Actions
Influences	Program Prevention Restricted Unrestricted Investigation Cases Evidence Victim Accused	Organizational leaders must develop and implement policies that address each of the listed activities to ensure employees are well-informed of their rights and the procedures for the organization's sexual misconduct program.
Communicating processes	Incident Retaliation Abusive Command Training Support Offense	The sexual misconduct policies, procedures, and reporting system must detail how the organization protects the employee and deters or eliminates negative repercussions.

Limitations of the Study

In this section, I will revisit the limitations identified in Chapter 1 to test the limitations to trustworthiness that arose from the execution of the study, if any. The first

limitation was related to the possible reluctance of participants to discuss the military's

sexual misconduct occurrences outside of the military setting (Jordan et al., 2010). The

results from this study revealed the participants were comfortable describing their

experiences and concerns surrounding the military's sexual misconduct policy,

procedures, and reporting system. The interview guide (see Appendix B) was used to

obtain the in-depth and reflective feedback from the participants knowledge of the

military's sexual misconduct program.

Another limitation pertained to the information concerning the offenders. The

punishments imposed on any offender was not explored during this study. Although,

several participants disclosed that during their time in the military, diverse methods were

used to circulate the punishment a founded offender received throughout the

organization. The punishment an offender received was not the objective of my study.

Thus, this limitation remained for this study. The next limitation previously addressed the

transferability of the study since only 3% of the leaders were interviewed. Even with

thick and detailed descriptions from the interviewed leaders, issues with transferability

may arise (see Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013; Malagon-Maldonado, 2014), leaving the

transferability up to the reader (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

The final limitation identified the use of a professional networking website, such

as LinkedIn, to locate participants for the study. Social networks provide scholars and

practitioners with a new method of locating qualified participants (Worrell et al., 2013). I

initially browsed the LinkedIn website to purposefully locate e-mail addresses of

individuals I had a previous professional relationship with to solicit interest for possibly

participating in my study. Ten retired military leaders were identified and e-mailed a

LinkedIn recruitment message. Once the potential participants responded to the e-mail

with their consent and two times of availability for a 60-minute FaceTime interview, an

interview was scheduled. Prior to conducting an interview, demographics were taken

from each participant to verify they met the criteria of a retired military leader, who

served in a senior leadership position of a military organization for over 5 years, and

processed any sexual misconduct complaint shown in Table 3 (p. 98). The use of the

professional networking website was helpful for me to locate the 10 qualified participants

for my study.

Recommendations

In this section, I will discuss the recommendations for further research grounded

in the strengths and limitations of my study and the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The

experiences presented by leaders of the multiple perceptions concerning the same sexual

misconduct reporting system can be beneficial to leaders in the same or different

industries, academics, and societies. I identified the possible areas for future research

based on the findings from my study including reporting process, leader decision making

processes, gender in the workplace, reporting deterrent factors, hostile work

environments, leader contributions, and social comparisons shown in Table 15 (p. 170).

Reporting process. A future study ascertaining how many military cases have

been lost when deviations to the established guidelines occurred would assist in verifying

the importance of investigators following the rules. Hassan and Wright (2014)

recommended a future study be conducted to explore the effects of formal management

programs to enhance ethical behaviors of government leaders. Improved ethical leadership can increase follower satisfaction with a leader, the perception of leader effectiveness, the quality of the leader-member exchange relationship, organizational commitment, and prosocial behavior, as well as reduce deviant employee behavior, to name a few (Hassan & Wright, 2014).

Leader decision making processes. A future study comparing how the investigation of military cases have evolved over time would illustrate what changes have been successful and what did not work towards achieving a founded result. Hassan and Wright (2014) recommended a future study of the influence of specific ethical leadership behaviors as perceived by subordinates. Previous studies provide evidence that ethical leadership can influence the attitudes and behavior of subordinates (Hassan & Wright, 2014).

Gender in the workplace. A future study identifying how sexual misconduct differs by gender would document what sexual occurrences each gender experience the most. Harris and Firestone (2010) recommended identifying the link between harassment and stereotypical gender role ideologies may be the key to creating an organizational climate with zero-tolerance for sexual harassment of any kind. Davidson et al. (2013) recommended exploring the significance of the relationship between the victim and transgressor (i.e., acquaintances vs. long-term partners) for a better understanding of which relationship may affect the level of forgiveness. Reddy and Murdoch (2016) recommended a fundamental, foundational study of military men be undertaken to better

understand how men experience and perceive potential military sexual events. The results from this study could be compared to how women perceive the same experiences.

Reporting deterrent factors. A future study identifying how many individuals have been falsely accused in the military would shine a light on what may cause someone to file a false sexual misconduct claim. Campbell et al. (2013) recommended a study to assess employee perceptions of sexual misconduct and whether their workplace had adopted a no-harassment policy and would take action to enforce the policy. Although the obligation remains with employers to prevent sexual harassment and create a no-harassment policy that includes provisions for education, reporting, and investigation, employees must also assume responsibility in preventing and reporting sexual harassment (Campbell et al., 2013). Blandisi et al. (2015) recommended a future study explores the amount of wrongful convictions. The study would assist in educating the public and governments of the negative implications and stigma exonerees experience (Blandisi et al., 2015). LeMaire et al. (2016) recommended a future examination of the attitudinal and situational factors related to labeling an assault.

Hostile work environments. A future study to determine the best practices for improving hostile work environments would provide organizational leaders with options suitable for their workplace setting. Van De Griend and Messias (2014) recommended a study on the conceptualization of workplace violence of violence against women and other vulnerable individuals. The goal of the study would be to heighten awareness, expand research, facilitate transnational and cross-cultural comparisons, enhance policy initiatives, improve education, prevention interventions, and disseminate treatment

options to individuals throughout an organization (Van De Griend & Messias, 2014). Morganson and Major (2014) recommended a future study should be conducted to examine men's experience of customer service harassment determine if the retaliation coping styles differ by gender.

Leader contributions. C. Richards et al. (2014) recommended a study to examine whether increased training and education for university faculty and students concerning the inherent problems associated with faculty and student consensual sexual relationships would be helpful. The training should be provided to incoming faculty and students pertaining to the issues surrounding power imbalances and informing individuals of an institution's rules concerning such relationships will not only protect both parties from engaging in potentially career-ending or academically disrupting decisions but will also protect them from unequal treatment from administrators and or other faculty members (Richards et al., 2014). Schmid (2010) recommended a future study be conducted to examine if the military's culture contributes to the sexual misconduct or a study to ascertain whether a change in the military's policies, leaders' actions, and culture could reduce the occurrence of sexual misconduct events.

Social comparisons. A future study ascertaining whether the best methods from the military's sexual misconduct policies and the policies from different industries can be intertwined together to create societal sexual misconduct policies that would benefit everyone. Tseng (2014) recommended a future study could examine cultural variables, such as power distance and collectivism, to determine the impact in the workplace and using a qualitative methodology with in-depth interviews could offer an advantage to

scholars and practitioners to gain more knowledge of the sexual harassment problems. Hassan and Wright (2014) recommended a future study to investigate the effects of cultural differences on the definition of ethical and unethical behaviors. Integrity and honesty are considered important determinants of leadership effectiveness (Hassan & Wright, 2014).

In summary, the findings from my study identified seven potential areas for further research to include examining how men and women experience and perceive the same potential military sexual events. Further studies on reporting process, leader decision making processes, and hostile work environments pertaining to sexual misconduct. Sexual misconduct remains an individual, organizational, and societal issue. Leaders working together, regardless of background or industry, may be the key to minimizing and eliminating sexual misconduct as a whole.

Implications

Positive Social Change

The results of this study contribute to positive social change through their potential to be used to deter or eliminate sexual misconduct at the individual, organizational, and societal levels. The findings also add to the body of knowledge relating to the reporting system for sexual misconduct. The transferability of the results lies with other scholars and practitioners to use for future studies to examine and gather additional information.

Individual level. The evidence is presented in my study for individuals to examine and identify the sexual misconduct behaviors that should be reported to include

gender in the workplace, reporting deterrent factors, and hostile work environments. The Department of Defense (2016b) emphasized building a respectful environment and preventing sexual assault is not only the responsibility of the leadership personnel. Every service member has a role to play in fostering a military workplace environment that is free from sexual misconduct (Department of Defense, 2016b). Allowing subordinate soldiers to assist in creating a safe sexual misconduct free atmosphere encourages them to contribute more to the process.

My study supports hostile work environments can result from the failed communication channels of sexual misconduct policies, procedures, and reporting system within an organization. Individuals in leadership positions can be held accountable for creating a sexually hostile environment and should avoid creating a situation that adversely impacts the working or learning environment of others (Richards et al., 2014). Reducing sexual misconduct in the workplace requires interventions from different sectors and changes in individual sexual discriminatory behaviors and attitudes (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2015). Every individual, at every level, in an organization has a responsibility when it comes to deterring and eliminating sexual misconduct.

I developed a checklist using the emerged subthemes from my data analysis that can be used to identify the possible influences and communicating processes of a sexual misconduct reporting system shown in Table 16 (p. 184). Combatting the harassment that constitutes a hostile work environment includes behavior that unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating or offensive atmosphere (Richards et al., 2014). Similarly, veterans who possibly experienced some form of

sexual incident while in the military may not be willing to utilize the services from

veteran affairs for fear of encountering the same types of individuals who perpetrated the

initial sexual misconduct (Mattocks et al., 2012). A positive change begins with the use

of the strategy to identify the influences and communicating processes of a sexual

misconduct reporting system checklist to deter or eliminate sexual misconduct in the

workplace.

Organizational level. The evidence is presented in my study for organizational

leaders to examine and identify the sexual misconduct behaviors that should be

monitored or updated to include reporting process and leader decision making.

Transformations in organizational discriminatory behaviors and attitudes demand a

concerted effort by inspired and inspiring leaders (especially since leaders are the role

models in the workplace and set the tone), and sustained national and local investments

(Garcia-Moreno et al., 2015). Discriminatory behaviors and attitudes include individuals

remaining silent about sexual misconduct in organizations because the negative outcomes

that arise from whistle blowing could be very harmful to the relationship between the

whistle blower and the harassers (Tseng, 2014). Any employee who observes sexual

misconduct in an organization must feel safe enough to report the dysfunctional

behaviors to organizational leaders; subsequently, the report must be further investigated.

My study supports that the reporting processes for sexual misconduct must

motivate victims within an organization to report an incident regardless if the accused is a

coworker or supervisor. Sexual misconduct has previously received research and legal

attention focusing on organizational members (i.e., supervisors and coworkers) as the

perpetrator (Morganson & Major, 2014). Sexual misconduct occurs more frequently by perpetrators employed in the victim's same organization (Morganson & Major, 2014). A positive change may occur when organizational leaders implement stringent policies and punishments concerning sexual misconduct events.

Societal level. The evidence is presented in my study for societal leaders to explore the strategies for the prevention or elimination of sexual misconduct manners that spill over into the individual and organizational behaviors that includes social comparison. Despite the increasing attention of sexual misconduct on a global stage, the issue is still under investigated (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2015). Sexual misconduct has become a critical social issue particularly in organizational environments due to the rising number of women in the labor market (Herrera et al., 2014). Fair treatment of men and women in the labor force remains a constant issue throughout society.

McLaughlin et al. (2017) shared during a press conference in 2017, President Trump voiced if his daughter was sexually harassed at work, he "would like to think she would find another career or find another company" (p. 1). A combination of surveys and interview data revealed 80% of the women reported experiencing either unwanted touching or a combination of other forms of harassment changed jobs within 2 years (McLaughlin et al., 2017). Many women who are harassed cannot afford to quit their jobs (McLaughlin et al., 2017). Other options must be explored and implemented for sexually harassed or assaulted victims, forced to run from the issue is not the answer.

My study supports that societal changes concerning sexual misconduct are essential to address the individual and organizational behaviors and attitudes. The

elimination of sexual misconduct requires the force and influence of a large body of committed, vocal leaders, including policy makers, survivors of sexual misconduct, academics, and advocates at high political levels and from within communities (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2015). The reaction from society and the embarrassment that accompanies a sexual misconduct incident are more of a deterrent for an offender than the formal punishment; in other words, a feeling of shame serves society as a tool for imposing social supervision (Peled-Laskov & Gimshi, 2014). A positive change may occur when more convictions of sexual misconduct are shared throughout society to act as a deterrence for future potential predators.

Recommendations for Practice

My study reduces the gap in the ways a military's reporting system influence leaders' decision making processes and importance of an effective flow of information through communication channels regarding the reporting system for sexual misconduct in an organization. The results from this study provide leaders with a deeper understanding of the changes required to a reporting system to assist in making it more useful for the leaders and individuals who need to process or report what they believe to be a sexual misconduct event outlined in the military regulations. Training events can be scheduled to communicate any updates made to the current policies, procedures, or reporting system pertaining to sexual misconduct.

The Department of Defense (2016b) recommended future analysis of leadership climate, hazing, and bullying may assist in identifying influences of leader decision making processes and deterrent reporting factors. The developed checklist may assist in

identifying the possible influences and communicating processes of a sexual misconduct reporting system (see Table 12). A positive social change may occur from this study just by creating an awareness through the findings.

Conclusions

Sexual misconduct occurrences continue to disrupt individual, organizational, and societal routines. Battling such occurrences may need to occur from several fronts including individual, organizational, and societal. Men and women who hold more traditional gender role attitudes attribute less responsibility to the perpetrator for the sexual harassment incidents committed than do participants with less traditional attitudes (Balogh et al., 2003). Individuals preserving traditional gender and workplace roles could be unwilling hinderances leaders face while they attempt to deter or eliminate sexual misconduct in general.

Several circumstances discourage victims from reporting sexual misconduct occurrences on an individual, organizational, or social level. First, individuals feel that damage to their reputation is a significant barrier because it can follow them for the length of their career (Department of Defense, 2017). Second, individuals fear professional retaliation (i.e., being passed over for promotion, assigned undesirable duties or locations, or receiving poor evaluations) when deciding whether to report a sexual misconduct event in the organization (Department of Defense, 2017). Finally, social retaliation in the form of damage to an individual's reputation or being excluded from normal social functions or events, function as a motivator against reporting a sexual misconduct incident (Department of Defense, 2017). Sexual misconduct deterrent factors

remain a concern and must be addressed at the individual, organizational, and societal levels. When the gender lines are erased and everyone are treated equally, preventing and eliminating sexual misconduct in the workplace and society becomes an achievable goal.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Date: _____ Interviewer: <u>Catherine Mincey</u>

Participant #: _____

Instructions for the Interview:

1. Obtain verbal confirmation of the Informed Consent Form and permission to be audio-taped for the study from the participant.

2. Provide the participant with his or her numeric identifiable number.

3. Audio record the Skype/FaceTime/in-person/phone interview.

4. Review the purpose of the research study with the participant.

5. Stick to the interview questions and have the participant elaborate on his or her responses.

6. Include probing questions or comments if the participant is not clear or detailed in his or her response.

7. Take notes onto an observation guide (see Appendix C) during the interview.

8. Inform the participant that the interview transcript is forthcoming for him or her to check and validate the responses (only if the participant refuses to be audio-taped).

9. Thank the participant for his or her participation in the research study.

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Participant No.:

1. Please describe in detail the military's sexual harassment and sexual assault program and how the reporting system works.

2. Describe an effective leader's decision making process as it pertains to sexual misconduct complaints.

3. Describe the ways leaders are allowed to deviate from or add to the reporting system's established guidelines.

4. In what ways does the reporting system assist a leader in his or her decision making? Why?

5. In what ways does the reporting system hinder a leader in his or her decision making? Why?

6. What were some of the deviations to the reporting system that seemed to be helpful or did not work?

7. What challenges do leaders experience when processing sexual misconduct incidents reported against soldiers they directly or indirectly supervise within an organization?

8. What are the social implications (external factors) leaders consider when processing sexual misconduct complaints in the military?

9. How can a victim's reaction to a leader's decision following a sexual misconduct investigation affect an organization's operation?

10. If an organization does not adequately communicate the policies, procedures, and reporting system for sexual harassment and sexual assault, what can be the outcome?

11. What communication practices can be used to ensure everyone within the organization is informed and aware of the policies, procedures, and reporting system pertaining to sexual harassment and sexual assault?

12. How important is it to have an effective flow of information through communication regarding the reporting system for sexual misconduct in an organization? Please explain.

13. How can an ineffective communication network hurt an organization? Please explain.

14. What communication practices can be developed and employed by leaders to maintain or restore morale within an organization concerning sexual misconduct?

15. Is there anything else that you would like to add for the purpose of this study that I did not ask that you think may be helpful?

Appendix C: Observation Guide

Self-expression: vocalizing; self-directed vs. hesitant/observing & imitating others' work; active vs. passive.

Relational behaviors: interactions (affirmative/negative); support; collaboration; lack thereof.

Date: _____ Start time: _____ End time: _____ Location: _____

Activity: _____

Time Participant Behaviors/Quote

Impressions

Time Participant Behaviors/Quote

Impressions

Time Participant Behaviors/Quote

Impressions

Appendix D: Participant Tracking

Participants	Date of Contact	Response	Consent Received	Initial Conversation	Interview Date
1	16 Aug 18	16 Aug 18	Yes	16 Aug 18	18 Aug 18
2	16 Aug 18	16 Aug 18	Yes	16 Aug 18	19 Aug 18
3	16 Aug 18	19 Aug 18	Yes	16 Aug 18	20 Aug 18
4	16 Aug 18	16 Aug 18	Yes	16 Aug 18	20 Aug 18
5	16 Aug 18	16 Aug 18	Yes	16 Aug 18	20 Aug 18
6	16 Aug 18	18 Aug 18	Yes	18 Aug 18	19 Aug 18
7	16 Aug 18	20 Aug 18	Yes	20 Aug 18	21 Aug 18
8	16 Aug 18	20 Aug 18	Yes	20 Aug 18	27 Aug 18
9	16 Aug 18	20 Aug 18	Yes	20 Aug 18	22 Aug 18
10	16 Aug 18	20 Aug 18	Yes	20 Aug 18	27 Aug 18

Field Test Timeline

Participants	Date of Contact	Response
1	28 Jun 18	29 Jun 18
2	29 Jun 18	30 Jun 18
3	30 Jun 18	30 Jun 18
4	30 Jun 18	1 Jul 18
5	30 Jun 18	2 Jul 18