

Sexual harassment in the university and the army in Israel

Sarah Ben-David¹, Inna Levy² and Boaz Ben-David³

¹*Ariel University Center, Jordan Rift R&D Center and Bar-Ilan University, Israel*

²*Ariel University Center, and Zefat Academic College, Israel*

³*University of Toronto at Mississauga, Center for Research on Biological Communication Systems, Canada*

Abstract

Sexual harassment is a dangerous social phenomenon, and is one form of women's discrimination, and manifestation of hierarchical power perception of gender relationships. The fact that sexual harassment is still a topic of concern and a focus of Victimological research signifies that sexual harassment is still an ongoing phenomenon in civil organization, universities and the army. Israel is the only state where army service is compulsory service for female as well as male. Therefore in Israel university studies begins usually after the army service. Army is a hierarchical power centered organization, usually male are at the upper echelon, serving in combat units, while female serve mostly in lower status roles such as secretarial and combat supporting tasks. Universities are cast like organization where students are the lower cast and the teachers are the upper one. Most of the professors are male, while many of the students, especially in social sciences and humanities are female. As there is a time sequel – students enlist in the university after completing army service, it is interesting to note if there is also continuity in the perception and occurrence of sexual harassment.

1. Introduction

There are few characteristics that make a subject worthy of academic discussion or academic research. The main characteristics include novelty, frequency, and consequences severity. It is safe to say that sexual harassment embodies all of these characteristics, but one. The novelty isn't there. Sexual harassment can not be described as a new issue. Sadly, sexually harassing behaviors aren't new at all and can be found throughout history, although, the term "sexual harassment" is relatively new, and the awareness to sexually harassing behaviors roused only at late 70s (Rosen & Meltzoff, 1998).

1.1 Prevalence of sexual harassment

Despite of relatively high public awareness of sexual harassment only 35%-45% of victims file official complain (Adams-Roy & Barling, 1998; Gruber, 1990). Still, research shows that the majority of women (69% -90%) experience some form of sexual harassment at work (Baugh, 1997; Gruber, 1990; O'Hare & O'Donohue, 1998). Similarly, most of female students (60%-89%) (Mazer & Percival, 1989; Vaux, 1993) and female soldiers (63%-75%) (Bastin, Lancaster & Reyst, 1995; Firestone & Harris, 1994; Martin, 1990) experience some kind of sexual harassment. Unsurprisingly, minor cases of sexual harassment, like "sexual compliments and insinuation" and "unwanted sexual proposal", are more common than sever cases that include sexual assault (Gruber, 1990; O'Hare & O'Donohue, 1998).

1.2 Consequences of sexual harassment

Victims of sexual harassment suffer sever psychological, physiological and social negative consequences. Most of sexual harassing behaviors, and especially at the beginning stage, are vague and subtle. Therefore victims of sexual harassment, usually, aren't sure that they understood and interpreted the situation correctly. Consequently victims feel confused, in doubt and blame themselves (Charney & Russel, 1994). They also suffer from wide range of psychological and physical consequences, including stress, anxiety, anger out-bursts, crying, insomnia, weight loss and digestion problems (Loy & Stewart, 1984). Negative consequences differ according to the severity of harassment and some types of sexual harassment can induce post traumatic symptoms similar to those that combat trauma induces (Wolfe, 1998).

Sexual harassment invades one's personal and physical space (Wilson, 2000), and therefore creates hostile working environment (Charney & Russel, 1994). When the circle of people that aware of the situation widens, when more and more people witness the harassment, victims begin to experience negative social reaction and blame attribution as well (Martin & Guadagno, 1999). Thus, sexual harassment can cause problems in victim's private life and effects victims' effectiveness at work (Pryor, 1995).

1.3 Sexual harassment types

As this review shows different types of sexual harassment are characterized by different incidents rates and different consequences. Empirical literature distinguishes between five types of sexual harassment (Till, 1980): gender harassment, seductive behavior, sexual bribery, sexual coercion and sexual imposition. Gender harassment refers to verbal and sexist harassing behaviors like inappropriate jokes and compliments. Seductive behaviors include sexual and romantic unwanted proposals. This category differs from sexual bribery and sexual coercion by the absence of promises to reward for sexual compliance and threats to revenge in case of refusal (accordingly). Sexual imposition includes behaviors that are considered as sexual abuse, sexual coercion and sexual assault.

1.4 Theories explaining sexual harassment

There are few theoretical arguments that try to explain sexual harassment (O'Hare, & O'Donohue, 1998). One of the arguments presents biological factor and states that men are more aggressive than women and have stronger sex drives. As a result men behave in sexually aggressive manner in different situations, including work settings. While some women find men's behavior unwanted and/or offensive, men have no

intention to harass the individuals they pursue. Thus according to this natural/biological theory in most cases sexual harassment is a result of normal courtship (Tangri, Burt & Johnson, 1982).

Yet, if the claim that sexual harassment is a result of strong sex drive was true, then we would expect that most of the harassers were at the age that is characterized by strong sex drive. However the research shows that while there is no significant difference in age between men that harass women and men that do not, there are difference in social and organizational status (). Also, if sexual harassment is kind of assertive courtship behavior, then we would expect that the victim and the harasser will be similar in age, social status, attitudes as it is usually occurs in courtship situations. Finally, we would expect that both parties would be attracted to each other and nobody would file complain on harassment ().

Another explanation of sexual harassment states that sexual harassment can be explained only by the interaction between personality traits and organizational factors (Pryor, LaVite & Stoller, 1993). Pryor, LaVite & Stoller (1993) argue that there are people that have a tendency to become sexual harasser. These people usually are characterized by cognitive schemes that bind between sexuality and social superiority. Yet, these people may become sexual harassers only if situational factors will allow it.

The argument that emphasizes the importance of situational factor belongs to organizational approach. According to this approach sexual harassment is facilitated by organizational characteristics like: power differences, hierarchical structures and organizational climate (Tangri et al., 1982). Position of authority creates the

opportunity to abuse one's organizational power for purposes of sexual gratification. Although sexual gratification isn't the only reason for sexual harassment in organization and it can be used as means of intimidation and control.

According to organizational model not only power differences contribute to sexual harassment occurrence, and there are additional organizational characteristics that may contribute to prevalence of sexual harassment. These characteristics include factors such as the ratio of males to females in the work place, occupational norms, definitions of duties attached to the job, career alternatives, and availability of grievance procedures. Also, organizational model emphasizes the contribution of elements such as work spaces privacy, dress codes, visibility of ranks and signs of seniority, job requirements like long working hours, business trips and etc. to sexual harassment occurrence (O'Hare, & O'Donohue, 1998).

The socio-cultural model refers to the societal context in which sexual harassment occurs. This model addresses differentiation in socialization process according to gender. While women are taught to be passive, to be obedient, to avoid conflict and to be sexually attractive, men are taught to be aggressive and assertive (Tangri et al. 1982). Those differences in patterns of socialization preserve men's dominance over women. They also allow men to justify sexually aggressive behavior and cause women to blame themselves (Vaux, 1993). Thus, sexual harassment is both a manifestation of general male dominance (Farley, 1978; MacKinnon, 1979) and a mechanism for maintaining this dominance over women, occupationally and economically, by limiting their growth or by intimidating them (Tangri et al. 1982).

The sex-role spillover model (Gutek and Morasch, 1982) focuses on the skewed sex ratio in favor of men. According to this model in this kind of environment sex roles become more predominant feature than work roles, thus facilitating sexual harassment. Women's singularity and distinctiveness makes their gender roles be much more salient feature (O'Hare, & O'Donohue, 1998). Also, in organizations with sex ration skewed in favor of men, like army, women tend to be employed in nontraditional jobs, which make women to stand out. Accordingly, Gutek and Morasch (1982) found that women, who were employed in nontraditional jobs, experienced more sexual harassment behavior and more negative consequences from sexual harassment than the average working woman.

Finally, the integrative model assumes that sexual harassment is too complex phenomenon to be explained by single factor and it can be explained only by combination of personal, organizational and sociocultural factors (O'Hare, & O'Donohue, 1998). The main idea is that sexual harassment happens when four main factors co-exists. These factors are: 1. Motivation on behalf of the harasser (e.g., sexual desire); 2. Lack of internal inhibitions against harassment (e.g., viewing sexual harassment as illegal or immoral or/ and victim empathy); 3. Absence of external inhibitions against sexual harassment (e.g., lack of explicit grievance procedures and history of deficient actions in cases of sexual harassment); and 4. Overcoming victim resistance (e.g., the ability of the harasser to manipulate the victim thus she wont recognize and stop premonitory behavior to harassment) (O'Hare, & O'Donohue, 1998).

1.5 Goals and research questions

This article presents two studies on sexual harassment in Israel. The first study was conducted at the Tel-Aviv University and referred to female students. The second study was conducted at the Israeli Army and referred to female soldiers and female junior officers. The general goal of both studies was to examine the prevalence of different types of sexual harassment. In addition both studies examined situational characteristics and characteristics of victims and offenders.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Tel-Aviv University sample:

The Tel-Aviv University sample included 625 female students. Most of them were in their twenties: 49% were at the 18-23 age range, 44% at 24-29 and just 6.5% were older than 30. 90.8% were single and 9.2% married. 90.5% were B.A. students, 8% were M.A. students and 1.5% Ph.D. students. The majority of participants (89.3%) were secular, 7.9% defined themselves as traditional and only 2.8% were religious.

IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) sample:

The IDF sample included 1112 female soldiers that served mandatory service. The data regarding ages wasn't collected cause of IDF organizational interests. Though we know that the draft age is 18 and most of the soldiers are drafted in the first year after they finished high school, and mandatory service for women is two years. The data shows that 22% of the participants were privates (0-8 month of army service); 46.4% were corporals (8-20 months), 27.1% were sergeants (20+ months) and 4.2% officers. Regarding participants' job definitions the distribution in the sample was as following: 13 % combat duties, 37% combat assistance duties and 50% home front duties

(clerklier). Regarding education level, 1.4% finished less than 12 years of school, the majority (91%) had finish 12 years of school and got a matriculation certificate, and 0.8% had an academic education.

2.2 Measures

Tel-Aviv University research:

All participants were asked basic demographic data: age, academic degree and department, marital status and religiosity. Sexual harassment was measured through modified SEQ (Sexual Harassment Questionnaire) (Fitzgerald et al., 1988) that was translated into Hebrew by Avni (1990). The SEQ is a behaviorally based, 28-item survey. The respondents were asked to estimate each item on scale that included: "never" (0), "once" (1) to "more than one" (2). The SEQ includes five sub-scales: gender sexual harassment, seductive behavior, sexual bribery, sexual coercion and sexual imposition. Each item appeared twice: once in regard to sexual harassment by faculty members' and once in regard to sexual harassment by male student. The data collected through SEQ considered being indirect measure of sexual harassment prevalence. In addition every participant was asked directly if she was sexual harassed; whether or not she reported the harassment; and what kind of treatment she thinks the complaint on sexual harassment will receive.

IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) research:

All participants were asked basic question regarding: rank, army unit and the characteristics of work environment such as men to women ratio and est. Sexual harassment was also measured through modified SEQ (Sexual Harassment Questionnaire) (Fitzgerald et al., 1988) that was translated into Hebrew by Avni (1990). Although in this research the items dealt with sexual harassment by commanding officer and male soldier. This research also made the distinction

between indirect (SEQ) and direct measure of sexual harassment ("Have you ever been sexual harassed during your military service?"). Those respondents that gave positive answer on direct question were asked whether they reported the case, and if they didn't report they were asked "why?"

2.3 Procedures

Tel-Aviv University research:

The data was collected by Tel-Aviv University student association volunteers. They distributed questionnaires during first or last 20-30 minutes of lectures. Before the distribution the volunteers read the instructions and stated that the participation this research is anonymous.

IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) research:

The questionnaires were sent by military mail system to all combat female soldiers and to the random sample of female combat assistances and home front clerks. The envelopes with the questionnaire included new, unmarked envelope with research team returning address in order to allow the participants to send filled questionnaire back and to ensure anonymity. The return rate was 41%.

3. Results and Discussion

3. 1. Tel-Aviv University

The comparison between different faculties in prevalence of sexual harassment (Figure 1) shows that female students from faculty of social science reported the highest rates of sexual harassment cases. The lowest rates of sexual harassment were reported by students from faculty of exact science.

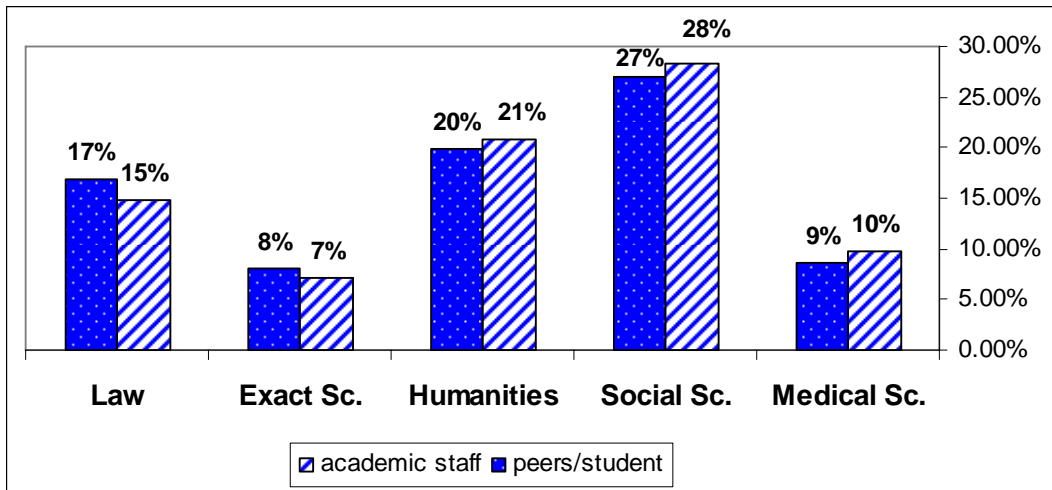


Figure 1: Comparison between different faculties in prevalence of sexual harassment by perpetrator's organizational status (male students and academic

The examination of differences between different types of sexual harassment shows that academic staff members and students are characterized by different patterns of harassment (Figure 2). Rates of gender harassment, seductive behaviors and sexual assault by male students are much higher than these rates among members of academic staff.

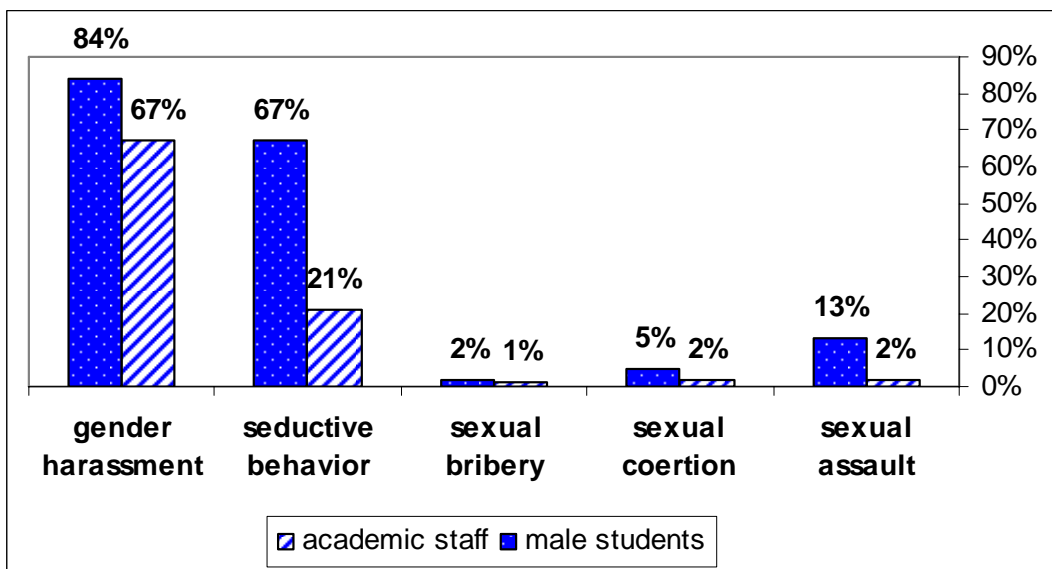


Figure 2: Reports of sexual harassment according to harassment type and perpetrator's status.

However, it is possible that cases of gender harassment and seductive behavior by male students are viewed by female students in less negative light and considered to

be less insulting than gender harassment and seductive behavior by academic staff members. Figure 2 also shows a higher level of reported sexual assaults by male students. Perhaps this finding indicates that low organizational status and young age may contribute to severity of sexual harassment.

3.2. IDF

The data based on indirect measure of sexual harassment in IDF sample (Figure 3) shows that 81% of female soldiers experienced some kind of sexual harassment. Most of them reported gender harassment that included sexual innuendos. 69% reported sexual suggestions, 52% reported incidents of touching and sexual body language. Regarding quid pro quo categories data shows that 26% reported bribery and 8% reported coercion. And finally 19% reported incidents of indecent exposure and 7% assault. Thus, less severe incidents of sexual harassment are more prevalent.

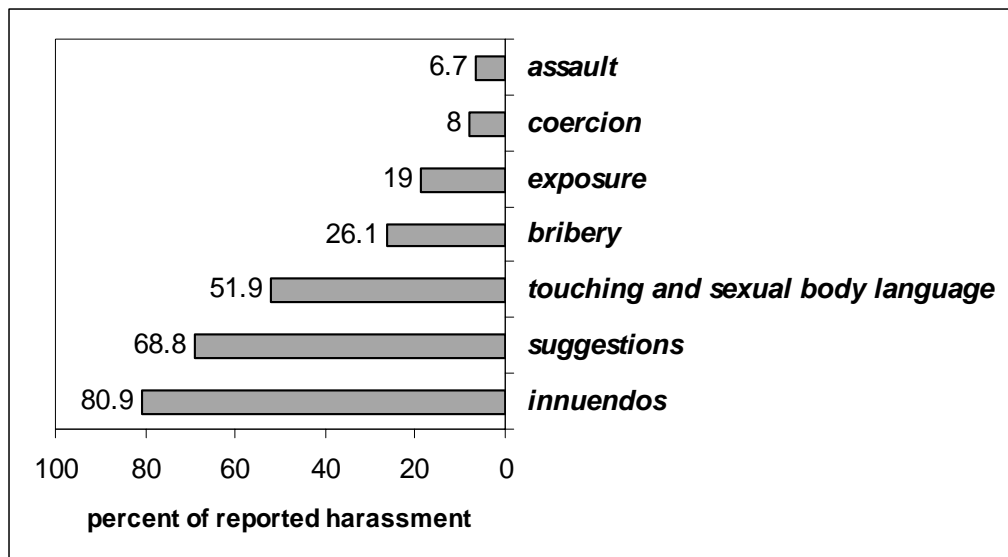


Figure 3: Female soldiers' reports of sexual harassment according to harassment type.

As referring to organizational status of the perpetrator, data shows (Figure 4) that sexual harassment by peer male soldiers is more frequent than sexual harassment by

superiors. However, this finding is based on indirect questions, which do not take in to consideration participants' perceptions about behavior included in the questionnaire. Findings about female soldiers' perceptions on sexual behaviors show that organizational status of the perpetrator determines whether the incident will be defined as sexual harassment. Except for clear case of sexual assault (rape), incidents involving peer soldiers were defined as sexual harassment much less than incidents involving commanding officer.

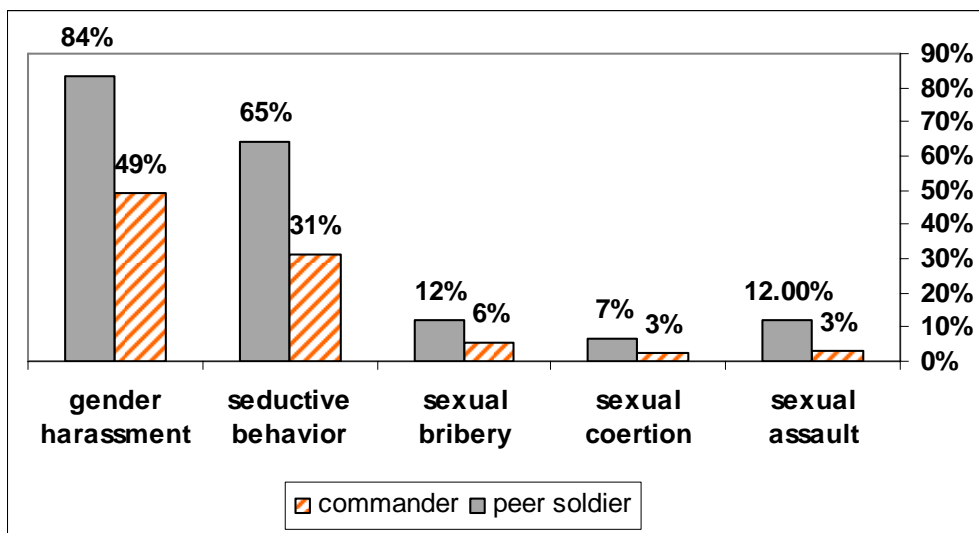


Figure 4: Female soldiers' reports of sexual harassment according to harassment type and perpetrator's organizational status.

In addition to offender's status the research examined whether the organizational characteristics like nature of army base and nature of female soldier job contribute to harassment frequency. As the data shows there no significant differences in rate of sexual harassment between open and closed bases (Figure 5) [$\chi^2 (3) = 6.57, p = .087$], and there is no significant differences in harassment rates between combat, combat assistance and home front jobs [$\chi^2 (2) = 0.18, p = .92$]. The only difference was that combat female soldiers reported more peeping. This finding is understandable in light of the fact that combat female soldier frequently live in field/ combat conditions.

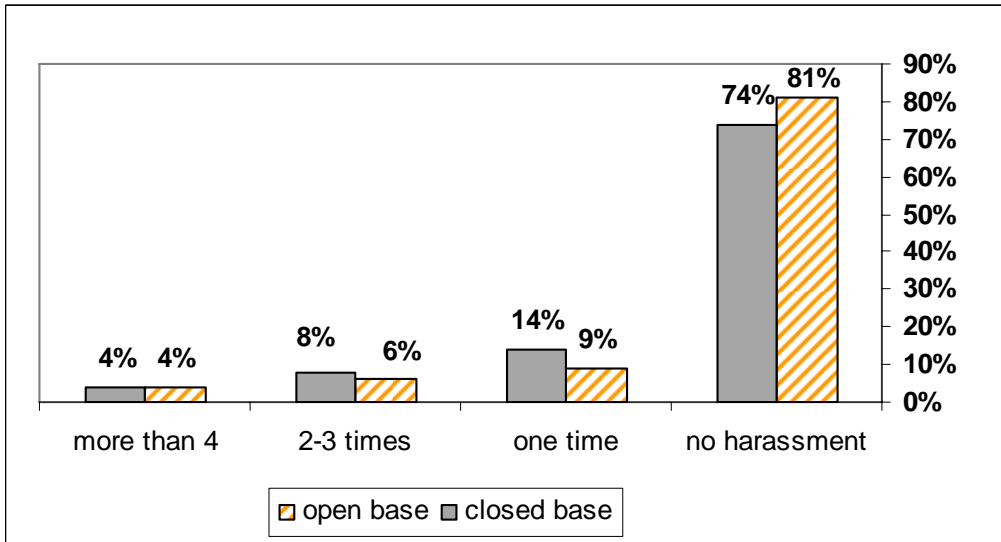


Figure 5: Comparison between closed and open army bases in prevalence of female soldiers' reports of sexual harassment (direct question).

Another interesting finding shows that there is dependence between gender ratio and sexual harassment frequency [$\chi^2(4) = 12.37, p < .05$]. In units with skewed gender ratio in favor of men sexual harassment was more frequent than in units with even ratio or skewed ratio in favor of women. This finding supports the sex-role spillover theory (Gutek and Morasch, 1982).

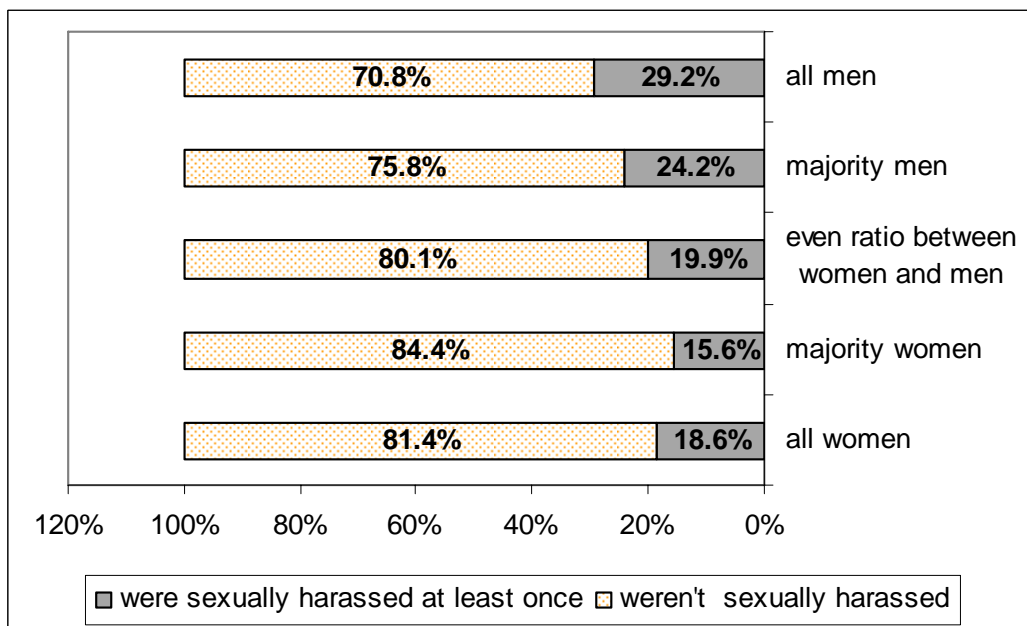


Figure 6: Gender ratio assessments by female soldiers and prevalence of sexual harassment.

3.3 Comparison between Tel-Aviv University and IDF

The comparison between female students and female soldiers (Figure 7) shows that in case of sexual harassment by superior there is a considerable difference only on gender harassment and seductive behaviors. Female soldiers reported less gender harassment by superior than female students; however female soldiers reported more seductive behaviors than female students.

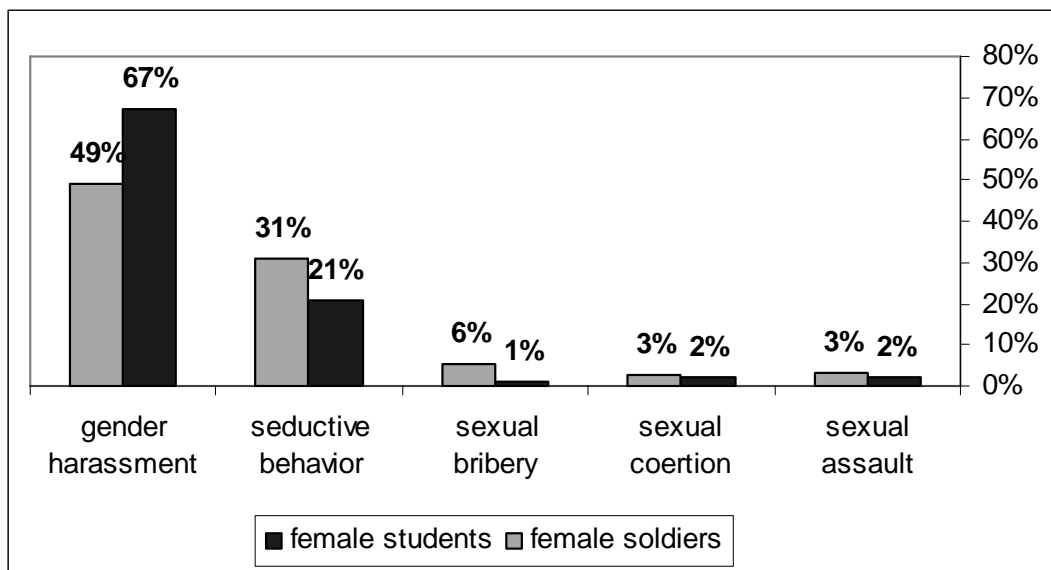


Figure 7: Comparison between female students and female soldiers in prevalence of different types of sexual harassment by superior (faculty member/ commanding officer).

In case of sexual harassment by peer there was no significant difference between female students and female soldiers (Figure 8)

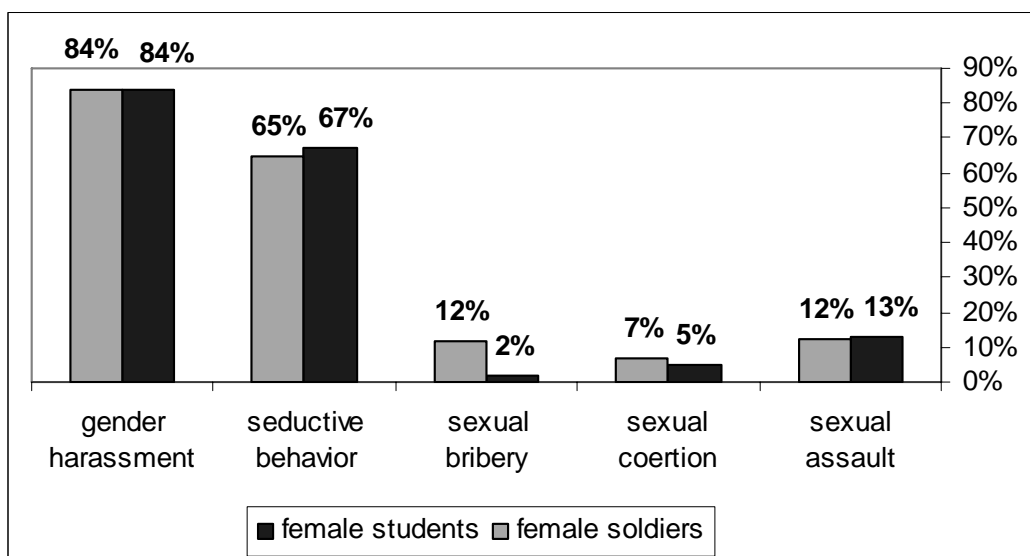


Figure 8: Comparison between female students and female soldiers in prevalence of different types of sexual harassment by peer (male student/ male soldier).

One of the most interesting finding (Figure 9) shows a striking difference between responses to direct and indirect questions. The responses to indirect question produce much higher rates of sexual harassment than responses to direct question. In rates between direct and indirect question is 60%, both in army and university sample. Assuming that direct question represents more truly sexual harassment rates, it seems that the actual rate of sexual harassment in the military is double than in the university, and one of each 5 female soldiers experience sexual harassment.

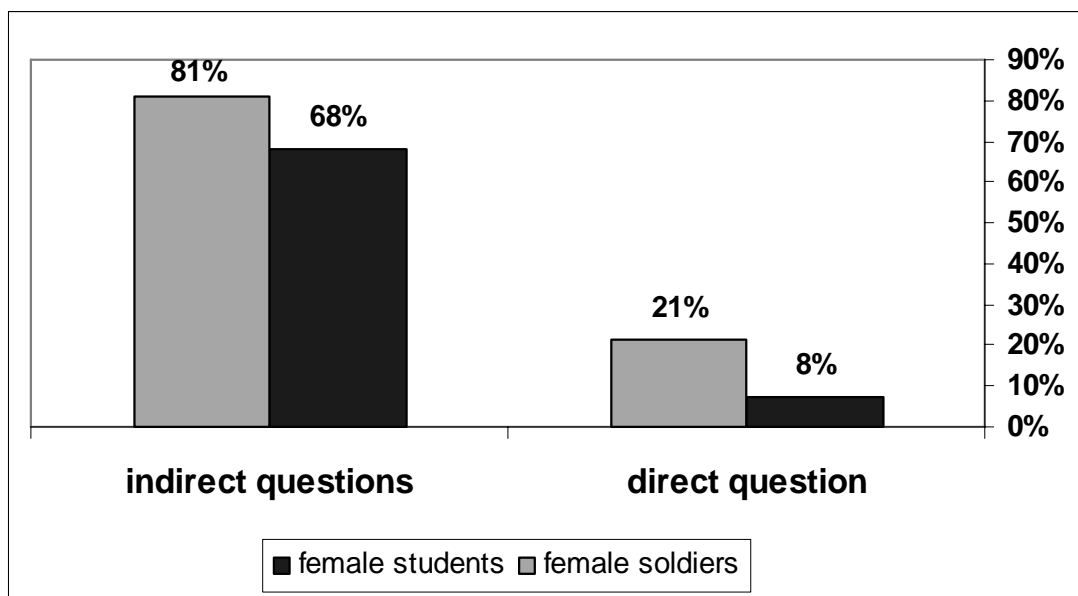


Figure 9: Comparison between female students and female soldiers in prevalence of repeated sexual harassment by superior (faculty member/ commanding officer)

Figure 7: Comparison between female students and female soldiers in prevalence of repeated sexual harassment by superior (faculty member/ commanding officer)

Slide 35:

In light of those findings the question is "do the victims of sexual harassment file official complaints?" the answer is: "rarely". 81% of sexual harassment incidents in university and 63% of sexual harassment incidents in army weren't reported.

Slide 36-37.

According to the reason given by female students and soldiers it seems that in both organization victims of sexual harassment doesn't trust official grievance procedures.

Summary and conclusions:

1. Repeated sexual harassment is more frequent in university than in the army.
 2. Gender harassment and seductive behaviors by superior are more frequent in the university than in the army.
 3. No significant differences in frequency of peer harassment.
 4. Direct question indicate that in general sexual harassment is more frequent in the army.
 5. Female soldiers tend more to report the harassment than female students.
-
- Sexual harassment is a wake up call from the dream on equality between sexes.
 - Sexual harassment exists even in those organizations that proclaim to treat men and women equally (university and army in general and combat units in particular).

- In spite of growing awareness to the issue of sexual harassment, women still
afraid to complain.

5. Bibliography

- Waldo, G., Berdahl, J. L., & Fitzgerald, L. F. (1998). Are men sexually harassed? If so by whom? *Law and Human Behavior*, 22, 59-79.
- DeSouza, E., & Solberg, J. (2004). Women's and men's reaction to man to man sexual harassment: Does the sexual orientation of the victim matter? *Sex Roles*, 50 (9/10), 623-639.
- Vaux, A. (1993). Pragmatics assumptions in sexual harassment research: Being guided without being misled. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 42, 116-135.
- O'Hare, E. A., & O'Donohue, W. (1998). Sexual harassment: Identifying risk factors. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 27, 561-580.
- Gruber, J. E. (1990). Methodological problems and policy implications in sexual harassment research. *Population and Policy Review*, 9, 235-254.
- Rosen, L N., & Martin L. (1998). Predictors of tolerance of sexual harassment among male U. S. army soldiers. *Violence against Women*, 4, 491-504.
- Adams-Roy, J., & Barling, J. (1998). Predicting the decision to confront or report sexual harassment. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 19, 329-336.
- Bastian, L. D., Lancaster, A. R., & Reyst, H. E., (1995). *Department of defense 1995 Sexual harassment survey*. Virginia: Department of Defense.
- Glikman, A. (09.07.2009). *The Supreme Court on Kazav's case: All cases will be trialed sequentially*. News: Ynet. The article was downloaded on 12.7.09 from <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3743912,00.html> (in Hebrew).
- Shumpelby, (29.6.2009). The article was downloaded on 12.7.09 from <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3738677,00.html> (in Hebrew).
- Tangri, S. S., Hayes, S. M. (1997). Theories of sexual harassment. In W. O'Donohue, (ed.), *Sexual Harassment* (pp. 112-129). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Tangri, S. S., Burt, M. R., and Johnson, L. B. (1982). Sexual harassment at work: Three explanatory models. *Journal of Social Issues*, 38, 33-54.
- Pryor, J. B., LaVite, C. M., & Stoller, L. M. (1993). A social psychological analysis of sexual harassment: The person/situation interaction. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 42, 68-83.