

CHAPTER III

BEFORE AND AFTER SOUTH KOREA'S #METOO MOVEMENT

To understand how the #MeToo movement advocacy strategies in influencing the policy change regarding the issue of sexual harassment in South Korea, it is necessary to know the background of how the movement was formed.

A. The Story of #MeToo Movement

The #MeToo movement was firstly initiated by Tarana Burke in 2006 as her response towards sexual harassment she witnessed. Burke started the movement with young Black women and those from indigent groups by giving education regarding the necessity to prevent and to combat the issue of sexual harassment within groups specifically and in society at large (Burke, 2018). It is a campaign that strives for affecting social change and to lead the people to pay more attention to the survivors of sexual harassment, showing them that regardless of what had happened to them, society would not blame and reject them. It seeks the support from both the internal groups and the society, together they uplift and strengthen the movement to completely eliminate sexual harassment.

Later, in 2017, actress Alyssa Milano tweeted 'me too' in twitter by adding the hashtag on it which unexpectedly gained 24,063 retweets and 54,454 likes from thousands women around the world who shared the same experiences of sexual harassment (Women, 2018). Social media has become a new tool to discuss the topics that previously seems taboo in society (Gupta, Gupta, & Nehra, 2019). It gave the victims the power

to express, to communicate, to expose the magnitude of this problem by attaching the hashtag #MeToo to the shared posts.

The viral of the hashtag #MeToo has led to a vital conversation about sexual harassment and has been pushed into the national and international discourse. The movement has since been a source of solidarity for women of all backgrounds who have experienced sexual harassment. The #MeToo campaign give assistances to the survivors of sexual harassment and their allies by linking survivors to the services and creating a platform for #MeToo (MeToo, 2018).

#MeToo movement has grown to promote the problem of sexual harassment experienced by the victims to encourage them who may be hampered to speak out and express. As the initiator, Burke and Milano had sparked the issue to get more attention, especially in the workplace which previously had a negative connotation. The culture and norms that develop in society about this problem tend to be negative to be published so that they do not get much attention from the community and government. As a part of society who has a high awareness to fight the problem of sexual harassment that develops in the community, Burke and Milano have the initiative so that this problem is addressed and then prevented.

The horrifying thing about sexual harassment is it can happen both in online and offline situation, regardless of where the environment is. Even worse, people with close relationship have the possibility to become the perpetrators such as parents, spouse, relatives, to colleagues, coworkers, and those in high positions. Talking freely about sexual harassment is challenging because not everyone can be open minded regarding this issue. However, Milano has succeeded breaking this narrow thinking and bringing the problem out to surface.

#MeToo has regained its popularity through movies, special programs in television, books, talk shows, and social

media (Hosterman, Johnson, Stouffer, & Herring, 2018). The victims also become bolder to share their stories. As the result, the cases of sexual harassment reported to the authorities have been highly increased which are vary from informal protest to formal written complaints. Surprisingly, perpetrators dragged to this problem are those prominent figure who worked in the film

The #MeToo global network continues to strongly influence not only in a particular country as a pressure, but also in other ways but by seeking support from intergovernmental organizations that are considered politically strong (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). To exert pressure on target countries through pressure from intergovernmental organizations, networks will try to maximize their influence on their target actions. They begin to influence discursive positions when they persuade countries or international organizations to support international declarations or change the position of domestic policies towards network advocacy. For example, pushing states or international organizations to make more binding commitments by signing conventions and codes of conduct on the issues being advocated (Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

The issue of sexual harassment in the workplace brought forward in the hashtag #MeToo case has become a global concern by highlighting the problem of women in the workplace. Cultural settings and norms that lead to claims of sexual harassment at work for women tend to have a slight resonance among domestic communities. These violations are basically common, but community access to reporting to law enforcement may be hampered by certain factors. Although the issue of sexual harassment has its own legitimacy for victims to report, the culture and norms that develop in the community do not provide support for victims. As a result, most victims of sexual harassment, especially women in their workplaces, did not report the violations. #MeToo movement had brought the assistance of other activists who are concerned with the issue of

sexual harassment in the workplace and encouraged the creation of connections to discuss the same views on this issue.

B. South Korea before #MeToo Movement

Before #MeToo movement exists and reached South Korea, the other women's movements have begun in the late nineteenth century as part of the national liberation movement under Japanese colonial rule. It was regarded as exemplary in the term of women's movement over the last thirty years. However, different from Western countries where the feminism and women's movement seemed to be declined in the late 1970s, the women's movement has been strangely invisible (Grey & Sawyer, 2008). Nevertheless, women's movement in South Korea has been overshadowed due to its political and historical context. The movement tend to focus on the economic growth, industrialization, and political instability rather than the advancement of women's right. The historical context has led the women's movement in Korea to fight for national liberation and the modernization, re-unification, and democratization of Korean society (Cho, 1994). At this point, feminist organizations that concentrated only on women's issues began to be established, giving rise to a more independent and autonomous women's movement. It was only in the early 1990s that a "gender perspective" began to be institutionalized within the women's movement.

Under Korean law, sexual harassment such as raping carries a punishment of seven years to life imprisonment. According to the Supreme Prosecutors' Office, In 2011, 22,034 rapes were reported, of those, 18,591 cases resulted in arrests with a total of 18,880 offenders being convicted. However, only 12 percent of those found guilty, or 2,289, were sentenced to jail time. Under the law, rape is punishable with a prison sentence from 7 years to life imprisonment. The definition of rape includes adult males as victims, as well as marital rape.

As of 2009, the statute of limitations for sexual assault is six months (Herald, 2013).

Although several women's movement and policies to combat sexual harassment already exist since decades ago, however, none of them can win the battle with the patriarchal system that has rooted in South Korea's culture. Discrimination against women still become a significant problem in which it can lead to sexual harassment. But later, the emergence of #MeToo slowly but certainly become the first movement that is able to break the hegemony of patriarchal system in South Korea.

C. South Korea after #MeToo Movement

#MeToo movement that was initially started in the United States, now has widely spread to countries over the world, including South Korea. In the beginning, when the hashtag of #MeToo went viral throughout the world, South Korea still remained relatively quiet. Even barely a month before #MeToo arrived in South Korea, K-pop idol Son Na-Eun of Apink faced a storm of criticism for promoting feminism when she posted a photo of her phone cover that read "Girls Can Do Anything". Most of people still ignore the issue of gender inequality and pretend not to see any problems because they are afraid of consequences when starting debates about the topic (Society, n.d.).

Women have traditionally faced mockery for bringing up these issues, and female victims of sexual harassment or assault had to overcome suspicion, with those in power, men, likely to silence or tarnish them. Therefore, the existence of patriarchal systems and discrimination against women indirectly makes the victims of sexual assault and harassment in South Korea remain silent. Afterward, when the #MeToo movement arrived in South Korea, it seems like the first brave step of a few to break down the barriers.

Seo Ji-Hyeon, a public prosecutor, marked the turning point of #MeToo Movement in January 29th, 2018. In her live interview, she accused a former South Korean Ministry of Justice Planning Director and former prosecutor Ahn Tae-Geun of groping her during a funeral in 2010 (Wilder, 2019). According to Seo, she had reported the incident she experienced to her supervisors. Nevertheless, instead of conducting a deep investigation, the incident was covered up like it never happened. Furthermore, although she was greatly praised and rewarded by her supervisors for her performance before the incident, but, at the end Seo was demoted from her post in Seoul to Changwon Prosecutor's Office (Institute, 2018).

A series of allegations flooded the authorities after Seo admitted her experience of sexual harassment. Subsequently, the hashtag #MeToo widely spread to every sectors of society in South Korea. As a result, thousands of victims started to have courage to report this problem and accused allegations that addressed to many acclaimed figures in politics and arts.

A prominent public figure who is also well-known as a former artistic director of the National Theater of Korea, Lee Youn-Taek, was accused in the beginning of February by actress Kim Soo-Hee, Hong Seon-Joo, and the other women for committing sexual harassment since 18 years ago. These accusations have led to the admittance of Lee to all his crimes (Choe, 2018). Still on February, actress Uhm Ji-Young and a woman accused actor Oh Dal-Su for sexually harassed them in which caused him to not continue his upcoming *drama* titled *My Mister* (Yonhap, 2018).

Furthermore, an accusation had caused an actor and a professor of Cheongju University, Jo Min-Ki, committed suicide. He was accused for harassing his students both male and female and confirmed to be investigated by the authority. However, later the police found Jo was dead at an underground

parking lot in Seoul (Park S. S., 2018). The other cases also involved several acclaimed figures such as actor Cho Jae Hyun and prominent poets, Ko Un (Lee, 2018).

The next shocking allegation was coming from political sector of South Korea. Governor of Chungcheongnam-do province, Ahn Hee-Jung who is well-known for his good reputation and also expected as the candidate of new President of South Korea who would be replacing Moon Jae In, was accused by his former secretary, Kim Ji-Eun, for sexually harassed her multiple times. Feeling guilty, Ahn committed all his crimes and then be expelled from Democratic Party of Korea (Lee C. , 2018)

#MeToo has led the a series of accusations of victims toward their harassers. As more public figures are accused, there have been an increased number of celebrities, politicians, professors, and the other public figures accused of unwanted sexual advances and activities.

Table 1.1: Public figures are accused for committing sexual harassment

Date and Time	Victims	Perpetrators	Result
February 3 rd , 2018	Actress Kim Soo-Hee, actress Hong Seon-Joo and other women	Lee Youn-Taek, a former artistic director of the National Theater of Korea	Lee admitted all his crimes and resigned from his position in the theatre world
February 22 th , 2018	A woman and actress Uhm Ji-Young	Oh Dal-Su, an actor	Pulled out from his upcoming drama <i>My Mister</i>
	Students at Cheongju University	Jo Min-Ki, a professor and an actor	Jo committed suicide after the allegations addressed to him
March 5 th , 2018	Secretary Kim Ji-Eun	Ahn Hee-Jung Governor of Chungcheongnam-do province	Ahn committed all his crimes and then be expelled from Democratic Party of Korea