

CHAPTER IV

ACTIVISM OF #METOO MOVEMENT AND ITS STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE POLICY CHANGE REGARDING THE ISSUE OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN SOUTH KOREA

The emergence of #MeToo movement in South Korea is a form of response from the public to cases of sexual harassment that occurred in the country. Seo Ji Hyon's confession before the public has triggered the pent-up anger felt by victims of sexual harassment who finally have the courage to open their voices over the cases. In this chapter, the #MeToo Movement's activism will be explained through the theory of the Transnational Advocacy Network, where the movement works transnationally by bringing up an issue and including several actors.

In seeking an influence, transnational network using the same way as political groups or other social movements, but because they are not traditionally strong, in case of involving in state's decision-making process, they must use the power of their information, ideas and strategies to change information and the context of values in which the state makes a policy (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). Keck and Sikkink have developed typologies about the types of tactics or strategies used by the network to analyze the advocacy process and are divided into four: Information Politics, Symbolic Politics, Leverage Politics, and Accountability Politics.

A. The Strategies of the South Korean #MeToo Movement based on the Transnational Advocacy Network Theory

The main focus of advocacy is to encourage or to improve public policies or state behavior in accordance with the desires and interests of those who insist on the change

(Azizah, 2014). In a campaign carried out by the network, the researcher is able to use only one strategy or all four strategies simultaneously. Furthermore, the researcher will use all the four strategies to explain how the #MeToo Movement's efforts in influencing South Korea policy change in which the movement's efforts will ultimately result in achievement.

1. Information Politics

Along with the development of the era, information becomes increasingly easy and quickly distributed throughout the world. The existence of the internet has made it easier for individuals to share information with others without being obstructed by national boundaries. The existence of #MeToo movement was initiated by the worldwide mobilization of social media, which was also driven by the large contribution of international media in publicizing this matter. The media is an important partner in the information politics network.

The #MeToo search trend globally has also increased and has been mapped by Me Too Rising where access to information related to the development of the #MeToo Movement around the world is easy to get (Buxton, 2018). The development of greater information will certainly create resonance among international political actors and influence state actors to respond to this problem. These non-governmental actors will try to become influential actors in international politics by becoming alternative sources of information (Keck & Sikkink, 1999).

Although at the beginning this flow of information almost became a breeze through South Korea, due to Seo Ji Hyeon's confession, people who previously did not give any attention and were ignorant about the issue of sexual harassment became more aware. Besides, the perpetrator of sexual harassment that happened to Seo Ji Hyeon was someone who occupies important positions in government. Seo Ji Hyeon's confession led to a wave of recognition of the experience of sexual harassment by survivors. The power of #MeToo has

encouraged Korean people to talk about sexual harassment, which was previously considered a taboo in this strong patriarchy system country. Through the social media platform such as Twitter, the survivors of sexual harassment finally are able to share their stories in which previously they had not the courage speak out.

MeToo's momentum has led to an increase in national media coverage of sexual harassment. It was even succeeded in becoming the hashtag with the most frequently discussed tweets during 2018, which was also accompanied by other hashtags such as School#MeToo and #WithYou. This shows that the movement of #MeToo greatly influenced the victims to voice their experiences (Yim, 2018).

Not only Twitter, the popularity of #MeToo has pushed another popular platform of social media named 'The Blind' to add new features related to the issue of sexual harassment in order to help the victims to tell their stories while staying anonymous. The Blind application developer, Kim Sungkyun, revealed the #MeToo message board feature can be used by users who want to speak up about sexual harassment they experienced themselves or witnessed. The addition of this message board was triggered by the rise of complaints of sexual harassment at work (Times, 2018).

Until now, Koreans have been worried about exposing incidents of sexual harassment because the perpetrators are also from those who have important positions in society or people with high social class. As a result, the victims are afraid that if they report the incident, the company will blame them for disturbing the peace.

Based on a survey conducted by Ernst & Young Global, around 61 percent of South Koreans who work in private companies do not want to use company facilities to report to the authorities. They do not believe the company they work for will maintain the confidentiality of their identity. This percentage is higher than the average in the Asia Pacific region, which is only around 37 percent (Primadhyta, 2018).

Employees are hesitant to use the internal bulletin for fear of revenge, which is part of the company's culture in

South Korea. That is the reason why the Blind application is the choice for more than a million users. Compared to other encrypted applications like Whisper or Secret, Blind is more convenient to use because the application developers maintain user privacy by encoding data and information. They guarantee the security of the users, however, users must use corporate email for verification.

In its operation, users will be added to their company's board after signing up. This company's board also will be only visible to the employees from the same company, however, it can only be created when over 30 employees of a given company have joined Blind by verifying the company email address (Editor, 2019). Later, application developers will monitor what messages users write and delete if they contain elements of abuse, including statements that allegedly slander or violate someone's privacy.

Blind also facilitates a 'tech lounge' in addition to the individual company board, which enables discussions across companies. Users are able to share their stories freely but inappropriateness is not allowed. When the comments on the becoming too negative or offensive, the developer will send the user a flag. Furthermore, if certain content is frequently flagged, it will be deleted by the developer. The same goes for the users who are flagged over seven times, their accounts will be banned (Editor, 2019).

2. Symbolic Politics

According to Keck and Sikkink, the symbolic politics strategy is a network struggle through various symbols that can attract attention and provide convincing explanations for success in gathering public support (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). These symbols are very important to support the progress and success of networks where symbols make it easier for many people to recognize and remember a certain event. Moreover, as people and governments begin to pay attention to issues that

are framed using symbolic politics strategies, the network will increasingly grow.

Hashtag has become a symbolic strategy for the #MeToo movement where its hashtag has had an effect on increasing claims for cases of sexual harassment. The hashtag has encouraged people especially the survivors to feel supported by the sexual harassment they experienced that they were not alone. They become brave to share their stories related to sexual harassment by using hashtags. The encouragement of survivors who share their stories through hashtags has created solidarity among themselves, which motivated them to take collective action to show the high prevalence of this case.

The extension with a hashtag symbol which has the same term as 'Me Too' is used by the #MeToo Movement and similar mobilizations in various countries. Like, #WoYeShi and #RiceBunny in China, #QuellaVoltaChe in Italy, #YoTambien in Spain, #AnaKaman in Arabic (Adam & Booth, 2018). In France, using the hashtag #BalanceTonPorc, Senegal uses #Nopiwouma, as well as Sweden, Egypt, and others using their creative language (Stone & Vogelstein, 2019). The hashtag has been a support for survivors all over the world to have the courage to reveal the sexual harassment they experienced.

In addition to using hashtags as symbolic politics, the activist #MeToo Movement also seeks to provide support for survivors through a symbolic event that attracts public attention. In the momentum of International Women's Day, which falls on March 8, 2019, a total of more than 70,000 women of various ages and occupations voiced the action in Gwanghwamun Square in downtown Seoul (Park, 2019). Their actions are based on the rampant sexual harassment that occurs, especially the case of hidden cameras that have even entered private spaces such as hotels and toilets. Through the commemoration of this international women's day, the women held a demonstration by bringing demands to give more

punishment to the perpetrators of sexual harassment and protection of victims. On the demonstration boards written various appeals not only the hashtag #MeToo but also other hashtags such as #MyLifeIsNotYourPorn and #WithYou also colored the demonstration.

This is quite interesting to discuss because the commemoration of international women's day in 2018 was one of the biggest that ever happened in South Korea. Since 1920, South Korea has celebrated International Women's Day, but it was only in 1985 that the country officially began hosting activities to support the rights of women (Park, 2019). Later in 2018, #MeToo has become an inherent symbol and is closely related to the struggle of women to fight sexual harassment, and Commemoration of International Women's Day has become a momentum for women to voice their anxiety. The solidarity formed by the demonstrators gives hope that they have the opportunity to get justice by reporting cases of sexual harassment.

3. Leverage Politics

The actors of advocacy often come from weak group, therefore, to expand their influence they need the assistance from powerful actors. The networks must have the ability to persuade and suppress the powerful actors to exert influence far beyond their ability to directly affect state practice (Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

Leverage politics strategy in #MeToo movement can be identified by the networks that successfully attracted the attention of South Korean President Moon Jae In. The large wave of protesters who have protested make President Moon noticed that an alarming issue is happening in South Korea. As his response, in the commemoration of International Women's Day on March 8th, 2018 in downtown Seoul, President Moon Jae In sent a message containing his support for #MeToo

movement. #MeToo has led (Yonhap, 2018). Moon reiterated that sexual violence and gender-based discrimination should be eliminated. Therefore, government and society must work together to change the culture and attitudes (Aljazeera, 2018).

The emergence of #MeToo movement has led South Korea to realize that sexual equality and women's rights are totally important and all individuals should be respected. Although South Korea still needs long way to completely eliminate sexual harassment, however, it has reflected to the structure of sexual discrimination that deeply rooted in their society. The silence of victims and the lack of attention from the government has made the issue of sexual harassment become invincible and not handled well. Nevertheless, Persecutor Seo confession in the beginning of 2018 had led the awareness regarding sexual harassment across the country.

4. Accountability Politics

After a massive demonstration by demonstrators in central Seoul, the government increasingly felt urged to carry out their obligations in protecting victims who ultimately led to the government's promise to release a new system. The actors use political accountability efforts where in this effort, network actors together with supporting actors demand accountability from those in power to be consistent with policies and principles that have been made previously.

The creation of a new legal system by some of these actors will strengthen legitimacy for victims to report and ensure they are protected under the rule of law. The regulation is a material effect on the reported perpetrators because they will automatically get sanctions in the form of fines and other consequences under the legal product. It shows that the #MeToo Movement is able to influence powerful actors in international relations, both state and international organizations materially.

B. South Korea New Policy Concerning the Issue of Sexual Harassment: Equal Employment Opportunity and Work-Family Balance Assistance Act

The Government of South Korea has responded to the #MeToo movement by introducing strict new regulation to eliminate sexual harassment and give more protection to the victim. Government has added several new articles to the Equal Employment Opportunity and Work-Family Balance Assistance Act (EEO Act) which contained tougher penalties and higher fines to the perpetrators. The government declared that this act would be implemented on May 29, 2019 (Jumabhoy, Thomas, Lumsdaine, & Lim, 2019).

In this act, new definition of workplace harassment also clearly stated as the actions of employers or employee that trigger both mental and physical distress or undermine the working environment of another employee by taking the advantages of another coworker beyond the acceptable scope of workplace (Jumabhoy, Thomas, Lumsdaine, & Lim, 2019). In the new acts, several key features that be amended including sexual harassment training, obligation to investigate, confidentiality, protections for victims and witness of harassment, and further obligations on employers.

First, in sexual harassment training, EEO act will provide a training at least once a year to prevent the sexual harassment and the employers should obey the regulation. Second, in obligation to investigate, an employer who receives the report of sexual harassment should immediately investigate the accusation and also take steps to prevent and protect the victims for further embarrassment. Third, in confidentiality, according to the EEO act, the strict new confidentiality obligations will also address those who receives investigations of any complaints, or those who participated in the report. Fourth, the EEO act will provide the protections for victim and witness of sexual harassment by prohibiting any unfavourable

behaviors being taken against victims or complainants. And the last, for further obligations on employers, they must take proper action if the victims of sexual harassment is confirmed. The employer must also take appropriate disciplinary action against the perpetrators to give the victims a chance to be heard before any such action is taken.

The policy change can be summarized as follows:

Table 4.1 : The summary of policy change of Equal Employment Opportunity Act and Work-Family Balance Assistance

Policy	Penalty	Remarks
The employer is required to provide preventive education regarding sexual harassment in the workplace at least once per year (Article 13(1))	Administrative fine: KRW 5 million	Administrative fine raised (from KRW 3 million → KRW 5 million)
The employer is required to post or make the content of preventive education on sexual harassment available at all times in a location accessible to all employees so that employees are fully informed (Article 13(3)).	Administrative fine: KRW 5 million	New
Any individual who witnesses or otherwise becomes aware of sexual harassment in the workplace is allowed to report		New

it to the employer (Article 14(1)).		
Upon receiving a sexual harassment complaint, the employer is required to carry out, without delay, an investigation into the allegations while taking measures to ensure the alleged victim does not experience further humiliation (Article 14(2)).	Administrative fine: KRW 5 million	New
When sexual harassment in the workplace is confirmed, upon the victim's request, the employer is required to take appropriate measures to protect the victim by offering a change of worksites or paid leave, etc. (Article 14(4)).	Administrative fine: KRW 5 million	New
When sexual harassment in the workplace is confirmed, the employer is required to, without delay, take appropriate disciplinary actions or other similar measures against the perpetrator. In which case, the employer is required to give the victim an opportunity to be heard prior to taking such actions or measures against the perpetrator (Article 14(5)).	Administrative fine: KRW 5 million	Partially amended last sentence

<p>Disadvantageous measures against the victim or complainant of sexual harassment include:</p> <p>(1) dismissal or other measures resulting in loss of job or demotion;</p> <p>(2) disciplinary actions or other similar measures;</p> <p>(3) not assigning work or other duties against the victim's will;</p> <p>(4) discriminating against the victim in performance assessments, reviews or excluding victim from incentives, raises, other privileges, etc.;</p> <p>(5) restricting opportunities for education or training;</p> <p>(6) bullying or ostracism; or</p> <p>(7) other such disadvantageous treatment (Article 14(6)).</p>	<p>Imprisonment for up to 3 years or a fine of up to KRW 30 million</p>	<p>Fine raised (from KRW 20 million → KRW 30 million);</p> <p>Added specific examples of disadvantageous measures</p>
<p>Strict confidentiality obligations are imposed on any person who investigated the complaint, received a report or participated in the investigation of the sexual harassment complaint (Article 14(7)).</p>	<p>Administrative fine: KRW 5 million</p>	<p>New</p>
<p>Upon learning of sexual harassment perpetrated by its clients or customers, etc., the employer is required to take appropriate measures to protect the victim by offering</p>	<p>Administrative fine: KRW 3 million</p>	<p>Administrative fine added (from recommendation → legal requirement)</p>

relocation or paid leave (Article 14-2(1)).		
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