Convergence of #MeToo Movement into #SayaJuga?: How Social Activists in Malaysia Leverage Social Media in Empowering Women

Yong Le Goh
School of International Relations and Public Affairs, Fudan University, Shanghai, 200437, China, yonglewu21@m.fudan.edu.cn

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarhub.ui.ac.id/hubsasia
Part of the Digital Humanities Commons, and the Women's Studies Commons

Recommended Citation

This Original Article is brought to you for free and open access by UI Scholars Hub. It has been accepted for inclusion in Makara Human Behavior Studies in Asia by an authorized editor of UI Scholars Hub.
Convergence of the #MeToo Movement into #SayaJuga?: How Social Activists in Malaysia Leverage Social Media in Empowering Women

Konvergensi Gerakan #MeToo ke #SayaJuga?: Bagaimanakah Aktivis Sosial di Malaysia Memanfaatkan Media Sosial dalam Memberdayakan Perempuan

Yong Le Goh
School of International Relations and Public Affairs, Fudan University, Shanghai, 200437, China

ABSTRACT
This research primarily aims to highlight the interconnections among social activists, social media, and ordinary public in the actor-network encompassing women empowerment in Malaysia. The secondary aim is to expand the knowledge gap on active social activists’ perspective toward the development of the country’s women empowerment. Qualitative interview was used to create a holistic research on interviewee’s personal involvement toward women empowerment in Malaysia. The following themes were derived from the data analysis: an association exists between women empowerment and #MeToo movement; communication barriers to popularizing women empowerment; vulnerable groups in search of gender equality; and opinions toward policymakers’ attitudes in Malaysia. Actor-network theory was employed in highlighting the roles of human and non-human actants in the communication network. It suggested whether a unified hashtag is required to discuss gender equality issues in Malaysia. This research also highlights the research gap of the contemporary viewpoint from the social activists who aimed to empower their audience in Malaysia. Results provide insights into how opinion leaders and policy makers should construct strategies toward reaching their intended audience.

ABSTRAK

1. Introduction
On October 15, 2017, Alyssa Milano posted allegations on Twitter toward Harvey Weinstein, a Hollywood director infamous for his sexual misbehavior (Murphy, 2019). The initial #MeToo movement was founded by Tarana Burke in 2006 to support victims of sexual harassment. This movement aspired to encourage victims to speak up about their personal experiences and to condemn perpetrators of sexual misconduct (Murphy, 2019). The movement had formed online solidarity where the survivors tend to share their stories and provide mental and social support to those who had
suffered similar traumas. This movement highlighted the pervasiveness of the issue where victims began to metamorphose into silence breakers (Bhattacharyya, 2018).

The #MeToo movement as an online social campaign was revolutionary. After Alyssa Milano’s Twitter post, Harvey Weinstein, who committed unlawful sexual acts, was charged with 17 accusations, and his reputation was irreversibly damaged (Suk et al., 2021). He lost his reputation as a renowned producer after being dragged down by the #MeToo movement. #MeToo movement gained its popularity after its success in bringing down prominent male figures in their respective industries. It utilized online platforms to promote solidarity among the victims, such as emotional support, social support, and other positive messages (Schneider & Carpenter, 2019). The agenda setting of this once offline social campaign in 2006 had transitioned into an online social campaign. People started to react to the hashtag containing keyword #MeToo, #WeToo, #SpeakUp, and other related keywords to provide thoughtful assistance readily. The hyperlinks’ searchable function of the hashtags on social media extended the reach of user discussion where people were exposed to a greater scale of public dialogue (Xiong et al., 2019).

Other than the searchable nature of hashtags, the role of social media was deemed indispensable in the promulgation of the #MeToo movement. It acts as a virtual platform that allows users to express their personal experiences and heartfelt feelings while remaining anonymous (Salman et al., 2016). It also surmounts the most considerable inability of offline social campaign, which is the most up-to-date information transmission. Physical hindrances, such as the difference in geographical locations or time zones, will not affect the information flow in social media. Each user can access Twitter or Facebook as long as they have Internet connection. This social media feature accelerated the transmission speed of Alyssa Milano’s tweets where it gained almost 24,000 retweets after 24 hours (Suk, et. al., 2021). Social media organizations and social activists began to recognize the potential of social media and utilized social media to share their vision and mission.

Although the #MeToo phenomenon made people realize the irreversible outcomes and impacts on the victims, the prevalence of this social campaign under different cultural contexts must be ascertained. The highlights of the roles of opinion leaders, social media platforms, and the receivers will be discussed later in the research paper. The purpose is to emphasize the importance of women empowerment to hinder sexual misconduct, in order to prevent another victim from saying “Me, too.”

#MeToo movement first started as a social campaign to raise awareness on sexual misconduct. Some activists in Malaysia reposted the hashtag #MeToo to voice out their opinions on sexual violence cases in the country. In addition to discussing the topic about sexual violence or the #MeToo movement, which received few responses from Internet users, they tend to utilize social media platforms to empower women’s community with some relevant information in handling future cases (Hamid et al., 2016). Women empowerment is the key to eradicating sexual violence against women (Lundgren & Amin, 2015).

Sexual harassment and sexual violence have long been a taboo subjects of discussion in Malaysia (Marican, 2000). The prevalence of sexual harassment in Malaysia is due to the misogynistic nature and patriarchal structure inherent among the Malaysians. In Malaysia, child marriage is deemed legal under the Malay culture, and sexual violence is generally acceptable under the cultural framings (Boo, 2018). In the current education system, sex education is often overlooked as the students were taught more on the biological process of sexual intercourse rather than the preventive measures or the protection one should be aware of in unconsented sex (Aziz, 2016). Information regarding consensus and permission in a relationship involving sexual intercourse is limited. Malaysian parents are typically conservative and consider “sex” a controversial topic to be discussed in the household.

The flaws in the Malaysian legislative system failed to provide adequate legal support for the victims, as no particular laws for sexual harassment cases exists (Abdullah, 2005; Kong, 2018). For example, a sexual harassment case that transpired in BFM89.9, an independent radio station in Malaysia, brought tremendous allegations toward the male authority who conducted such an indecent act (Sukumuran, 2018). However, the case was settled in an internal meeting where the perpetrator did not receive proper legal judgment. Moreover, although a sexual harassment bill was submitted to the legislation for approval, the introduction of the “Guidelines in Handling Sexual Harassment Cases at the Workplace” in private sectors did not effectively solve the problem because the companies had the ultimate power to decide whether to implement it or not (Bernama, 2019).

Victim-blaming culture is another obstacle preventing Malaysia from advancing in addressing sexual violence against women (Roose, 2017). Japanese women are also facing a similar situation where they fear their social status as women in the workplace will be affected. They did not react actively to the social movement #WeToo as a derivation of the #MeToo movement taking place in Japan because they did not want to suffer from work deprivation (Hasunuma & Shin, 2019). Women in India are also afraid of victim-blaming culture, as the victims were often labeled as “bad” or “characterless” where justice for women is often neglected (Bhattacharyya, 2021).
2018). Thus, this daunting culture prevented women’s community from exposing their personal experiences as victims, thereby inhibiting the prevalence of the #MeToo movement throughout the country.

In a world where globalization almost links everyone together, simply dismissing the issue is not possible through multiple media practitioners. Although the pervasiveness of the #MeToo movement is intensifying worldwide, Malaysia was far behind the discussion where little attention is given to sexual violence cases happening daily in the country. Thus, this research aims to fill in the knowledge gap to identify how social activists can influence women communities to empower themselves in fighting against sexual harassment through the utilization of social media in Malaysia.

The following questions are raised to highlight the research gap to identify the interrelations between social activists, social media, and women community in preventing sexual harassment in the country.

RQ1: How did social activists leverage social media to fulfill their goal of empowering women?
RQ2: How did social activists perceive the women’s situation in the country to identify the need for women empowerment?
RQ3: How did social activists react to or work on improving the situation of women’s community in the country?

By incorporating actor-network theory into the research, the poor awareness of sexual violence toward women in the Malaysia context can be explicating in a broader aspect. Living actants, such as social activists and audience, are deemed influential in determining the outcomes of this study on how social activists or their respective organizations employ social media to raise awareness among the community. Instead of using content analysis on the post-event feedbacks or personal sharing from the victims, this research aims to explore how to attain women empowerment to curtail sexual violence against women in the country.

Actor-network theory was first mentioned by Latour in the year 1986 to define social groups as actor-networks, where the community comprises members known as “actants” that can be changed over time (Schmitz Weiss & Domingo, 2010). The influential components, in theory, consist of living or non-living organisms, where the original contexts assigned to the actants will not mediate with the result from the network. The actor-network approach constantly challenges the complexities behind the communication process and provides reconceptualization of social sciences (Miettinen, 1999). This theory also focuses on the resources of doing and acting being equally distributed among man, artefacts, and environment (Miettinen, 1999).

Actor-network theory provides an understanding of how alliance created between human and non-human factors can result in a robust system where the non-human influence was often ignored in past studies (Whittle & Spicer, 2008). However, the actor-network theory successfully filled in the knowledge gap where non-human factors, such as demographical differences, were considered in the analysis of the effect of information dissemination from the mass media. This provides a fruitful theoretical framework where the agenda setting of this scholarly research is influential on the outcome of this communication network. Moreover, the importance of technological advancements in this theory is crucial in highlighting the position of social media in this research. The transmission of information is no longer one sided and thus the audience can determine the knowledge they require from opinion leaders. Moreover, actor-network theory underscores the roles of opinion leaders who are limited to social activists in this network and social media in achieving the goal of women empowerment.

To support actor-network theory in the framework, the concept of opinion leaders was adopted to provide a more holistic approach for the explanation. The roles of opinion leaders are to convey the information from radio and print media to less active communities in the population (Bostian, 1970). Opinion leaders also contribute to shaping the public opinion by influencing the public through their point of views. The concept of opinion leaders first emerged through the two-step flow theory in 1948, where Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet introduced the two-step flow communication model to explain how voters made their decision during an election campaign (Liu, 2007). The theory mainly explains the flow of information from mass media to the opinion leaders and then to the end consumer, which is the public (Choi, 2014). The theory became a significant stimulant for research related to the dissemination of information from the mass media to the public (Bostian, 1970).

Despite the lack of evidence in how the audience’s media consumption affected the opinion leaders’ way of disseminating information, this theory provides a gap where actor-network theory can be incorporated to further explain the relationship between sender, medium, receiver, and the context.

Two-step flow theory must be included in the research on how social activists mobilized women’s community through social media, as the method provides several concepts that remain applicable in the present context. The idea is identical to how social activists wish to empower women by equipping them with essential knowledge on handling sexual misconduct cases. Therefore, the theory provides an innovative background for the research study.
Table 1. Demographic Presentation of Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Code of Interviewees</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Interviewee A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Communications officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Interviewee B</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Broadcast journalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Interviewee C</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Child activist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Interviewee D</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Educator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Interviewee E</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Interviewee F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Youth activist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Interviewee G</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Interviewee H</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Director of NGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Interviewee I</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Gender and development specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Interviewee J</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Interviewee K</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Activist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Interviewee L</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>General manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Interviewee M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Activist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Methods

This research is an inductive semi-structured interview where observable trends on the subjects are identified and a generalization from the observation is hypothesized (Ary et al., 2018). The approach used in this study is phenomenological studies (Ary et al., 2018). In phenomenological studies, subjects’ reactions and feelings will be the main focus to illustrate the subject’s perspectives as a result of his or her past experiences. Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions are used to ask for interviewees’ personal experiences to generate more data related to the phenomenal study.

Participants of the study are restricted to social activists who had posted about women empowerment and the #MeToo movement on their social media after the virality of the #MeToo movement through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp.

Purposive and snowball sampling are used for data collection in this study. Data sampling will be discontinued once no more new information can be retrieved from new subjects. The redundancy of information from the subject of study during the sampling is known as “data saturation point” (Ary et al., 2018). Although purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method where the researcher will choose their research subjects, snowball sampling would be included to ask for potential interviewees’ recommendations on other social activists (Ary et al., 2018; Black, 2016).

During the data sampling, the interview sessions will be conducted on the basis of the subjects’ preferences but the sessions will be conducted as online face-to-face interviews. Before the interview proceeds, subjects will be reminded that the entire conversation will be recorded for future transcription purpose during data analysis. In the presentation of the data, the age and occupation of the subjects will be disclosed to highlight their societal positions unless upon request.

Upon the completion of data collection, the answers retrieved from the transcription are thematized. Thematic analysis is a frequently used method in qualitative research during the data analysis phase. The themes are first identified, coding sheets are generated to classify the terms into the categories, followed by reviewing and defining the themes correspondingly (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3. Result

On the basis of the interview transcripts, the presentation of data are divided into five major themes. The first section includes the demographical presentation of the interviewees.

The age and occupation are as the indicators of the interviewees (see Table 1). Thereafter, these codes of interviewees are used during the presentation of direct quotations in the following session.

In terms of the local mobilization of the #MeToo movement in Malaysia, not all interviewees can clearly indicate that this social movement was initiated by Burke. Moreover, several interviewees shared on the relevance of the #MeToo movement to the hashtag (#). Despite that the hashtag is not prevalent among public discussion, the central idea of the #MeToo movement, which is to advocate for the victims, still lies beneath the activities performed by the social activists. In addition, the ordinary public might not be aware that the concept of the #MeToo movement exists in the discussions. Most of them would leverage online and offline approaches to empower men and women communities where gender equality requires effort dedicated from both genders. Interviewee A concluded
that face-to-face engagement reached deeper to the receivers, as it has a personal touch; whereas social media and mainstream media platforms can reach out to a wider range of audience. Hence, both types of engagements are equivalently important to empower Malaysians in understanding issues about sexual harassment and sexual violence.

The majority viewpoint toward the localization of the #MeToo movement is negative where eight out of 13 interviewees thought that this movement was not contextualized in the country. Interviewee H said that the level of deconstruction toward the core of the social movement among Malaysians was weak. An absence in translating the hashtag into a Malaysian’s version exists. The intersectionality and diversity of Malaysian society showed that one single hashtag would be incompetent to address the entire scenario in the country. Interviewee C added that the framework of the social movement can be adopted without applying changes but the contents must be adapted to spark discussions among the public.

The interviewees also shared about the challenges that they faced during the dissemination of information related to women empowerment, which are cultural, language, and perceptual barriers.

In terms of cultural barriers, victim-blaming culture, misogyny, and patriarchy often jeopardize the progressive popularization of women empowerment. When survivors of sexual violence started to speak up, the victims were being blamed for the tragedy where no one holds the perpetrators accountable for their crimes. The elderly group would think women as subordinates to men in power. Interviewee A pointed out that misogyny does not exist only in the opposite sex where women can also be opposing the concept of gender equality. This patriarchal society is also intertwined with conservatism which further resulted in gender roles. Thus, perpetrators would be unaware of their responsibilities in contributing to women empowerment.

Next, language barriers in translating women empowerment contents from English to other languages would impede the progress toward empower women. The major reason in failing to reach vulnerable groups can be ascribed to the lack of definition assigned to the key terms. For example, four interviewees showed how the Malay terms that are equivalent to the English concepts did not “make sense” to the audience. The term “sexual harassment” can be translated into “perlecehan seksual” in Malay language but this translation did not resonate with the listeners. Given that problems related to sexual harassment or sexual assault did not differ in terms of the languages used, the language barriers might hinder the messages from reaching the vulnerable groups.

Finally, perceptual barriers toward the term “feminism” would be depicted dissimilarly. Although the progress of women empowerment has been accepted worldwide, feminists are still being labeled as freaks or abnormal in the traditional context of Malaysia. Malaysian society was not ready to accept foreign concepts, such as gender equality, in the early years. The public could not separate personal politics from social activists’ professionalism, which might have caused for them to suffer in their own careers. This is one of the most significant stigmas faced by social activists when it comes to popularizing women empowerment in Malaysia.

Although vulnerable groups are those who lived through the reality where lack of tools and platforms to voice out their needs for gender equality exists, they would be often misinterpreted as not knowing their deprivation of rights and statuses. However, interviewees pointed out that the precarious groups are often self-organized and fully empowered. In Malaysia, access to technology, such as smartphones and social media applications, affected the underprivileged community in accessing information on women empowerment. Comparing the privileged community to the underprivileged, the latter will have less exposure to the contents about women empowerment or the #MeToo movement that are circulating online. Contextualizing women empowerment content in simple languages can help cater the contents for the marginalized community. Often, the concept and content about women empowerment are catered and circulated among those who are already empowered and have financial stability. The lack of common ground for both communities to discuss the same issue intensifies the disparity.

Almost all interviewees mentioned the incompetency or loopholes in Malaysia’s legal system which addresses sexual violence issues in the country. Although Malaysia was the first country in the Southeast Asian region that had established one-stop crisis centers in general hospitals, medical officers of the centers are incapable of fulfilling their roles in supporting the survivors. Most of them would practice victim-blaming culture toward the survivors. Although the Malaysian government has the resources to strengthen public infrastructures across different states, it would be very dependent on the policymakers where NGOs can hardly overcome the paucity of resources and support.

Moreover, 10 out of 13 interviewees pointed out the lack of legal protection for survivors suffering from the traumatic experiences of sexual violence. The major laws that are absent in the current legislative framework of Malaysia are sexual harassment law and gender equality bill. The current legal system in Malaysia fails to assign exact definitions to sexual terms in law enforcement, whereby the laws were not designed to protect the vulnerable groups. Another restriction in
Malaysia is that the Islamic political structure of the country applies a dual-legal system, namely, civil and Syariah legal system. Pre-marital rape in Islamic culture is not considered breaking the law as indicated in the Syariah legal system. Hence, the current dual-legal system employed by the Malaysian government reflects the society’s interpretation toward sexual violence and rape culture in the current context.

Holistically viewing, the interviewees mentioned that the discussions regarding sexual harassment are often neglected or delayed, where the process of policy changes is rather slow. Policymakers tend to favor issues that can cause an uproar in the society to receive support from the voters in the respective political constituencies. The current political leader in power would make remarks that assign gender roles as forms of sexist jokes, which is subtly perpetuating women’s roles in the society. Therefore, most of the interviewees would view the current political situation as “observable” and “improving” but the “progress is rather slow.”

4. Discussion

The first research objective is to identify the importance of social media in bringing up women’s awareness of sexual misconduct. The researcher highlighted the importance of social media in raising awareness through campaigns and promotions, engaging with the public, constructing online solidarity, giving voices to the survivors, and facilitating the bridging process among the users in the online sphere. The interviewees were asked for their preferences regarding the selection of social media platforms to share their opinions. Most of the interviewees prefer posting on Twitter, Instagram, followed by Facebook. Based on their answers, Twitter is the best platform to initiate a conversation among the users because the users can retweet and discuss the issues using the comment functions. The appealing approach toward the users must be re-strategized so that the correct information can reach the intended audience.

The second research objective is to identify the social activists’ perspective toward the situation of the women’s community in the country. The women’s community comprises privileged and vulnerable groups, where the accessibility to technology and exposure to the discussion about gender equality may differ for the two communities. Most of the interviewees believe that there exists an absence of connection to put both groups on the common ground for a thorough discussion.

This links to the third research objective, which is to highlight the role of social activists, social media, and the target audience in the actor-network to achieve the target: empowering the women’s community. As mentioned above, the interviewees take up the roles in disseminating information among their followers. They utilized social media as a platform to bring up some discussions or to serve as information portals. Traditional media was mentioned by the interviewees as an alternative approach to reach out to the elderly community who do not possess social media accounts where this community should not be left out of the discussion. Traditional media could be more effective where information distributed via this channel were legitimized and can penetrate deeper layers of the society. The coordination and collaboration among people would be more visible when it comes down to on-the-ground engagement. Therefore, online and offline engagements are deemed as equivalently important. The difference in terms of the approaches is either go wide (online approaches, such as social media) or go deep (offline face-to-face engagements).

At last, all interviewees pointed out the incompetency of Malaysia’s current legal system. The absence of legal protection, such as Sexual Harassment Act for the victims, is one of the major concerns for the interviewees. Moreover, the political upheaval that happened in Malaysia that changed the cabinet in power has dramatically decelerated the progress for the country’s women empowerment. The interviewees claimed that the previous progress was “observable” but the process for the actual implementation of laws or protection is considered “rather slow.”

The research aims to minimize the research gap of mobilization of women empowerment as a result of the popularization of the #MeToo movement in Southeast Asian countries. The lack of past scholarly research in identifying the importance of actants, such as social media, audience, and social activists in women empowerment, is successfully addressed in this study by employing actor-network theory. The roles of actants in this actor-network can be seen as different interviewees described their personal experiences to mobilize their target audience in reacting to gender-related issues. The findings highlight how social activists focused on social media and traditional media to target different sectors of the audience (Murdoch, 1998; Hanseth, 2004; Schmitz Weiss & Domingo, 2010). The research results clearly demonstrate how non-human factors, such as societal barriers, affected the acceptance of women’s community in perceiving information related to gender equality. Therefore, this research framework plays a major role in justifying the importance of human factors (social activists, audience) and non-human factors (technological advancements, dissemination medium, communication barriers) in creating a robust system of the communication network in Malaysia.

This research also aims to provide practical suggestions on preventive measures in handling the occurrence of sexual misconduct in Malaysia. During the interview sessions, many interviewees had stated their preference
in engaging with their audience through Twitter, which is considered the best platform to initiate a discussion with the social media users. However, the preference did not align with the primary research, where social activists should consider enhancing the popularity of Twitter usage among target audience or to change direction in leveraging Facebook and Instagram to reach a wider range of audience.

Most of the interviewees provided actual examples of contents that can empower the ordinary public in Malaysia. For instance, interviewees focused on acknowledging one’s fundamental right as an individual to receive equal treatment. This would work well in empowering a person to know that he or she deserves having the same right as the others. Moreover, the suggestions on implementing complementary sex education in the local schools can help guiding children in sexual education at an early stage. This would normalize gender equality at the foundation stage in society. Thus, education on fundamental human rights should start young to hinder the development of other societal problems.

In the end, the research results also serve as an indicator for the political leaders to reflect their performances in empowering Malaysian. The interviewees commented on the policymakers’ performances and pointed out room for improvements among political leaders. Political leaders are avoiding the importance of tackling sexual misconduct strategically in the country. Therefore, this study emphasizes the existing incompetence whereby political leaders can act against the problems. The results also provide a comforting recognition where the previous cabinet has contributed significantly to addressing domestic violence issues. However, the momentum of the progress in promoting gender equality can be further improved for everyone to recognize their rights to receive equal treatment.

This study holds several limitations. First, men and women communities must be equally highlighted, as they are the actants that are interconnected with the opinion leaders. Gender equality is unachievable without the involvement of either gender. The research study area must be broadened to enhance the inclusivity where the research focus should not be limited solely to women’s community. Second, the sample size must be expanded to enhance research validity. Anecdotally, although the interview results showed a trend of data saturation, different ideas can be obtained if more interviewees are participating in the data collection. The more testimonials provided by the interviewees; the fewer aspects would be left unexplored for this empirical research.

Future research can choose to interview participants with more distinct personal backgrounds to increase the research reliability. Moreover, most of the interviewees who participated in this research study are women social activists. Male social activists, victims, or individuals from different backgrounds should be invited to share their personal experiences on gender equality to enhance the originality of the research study.

5. Conclusion

Conclusively, using only one single hashtag(#) to unify discussions about women empowerment, sexual misconduct, and gender equality in Malaysia must be avoided. If the cultural differences and the distinctiveness of the different topics are grouped under one hashtag or being advocated under the same theme, it will lose the inclusivity to advocate for the numerous social issues happening in the country. The level of assistance required for each survivor would vary on the basis of their personal experiences and backgrounds. Therefore, tailoring different approaches to raise awareness about the problem would be best to target the major concerns faced by each community.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deepest gratitude toward Dr. Ashraf Sadat Ahadzadeh for her professional guidance in the project. I would also like to thank Dr. Wang Changsong for his enormous support throughout the research. This research was supported by the Department of Journalism, Xiamen University Malaysia.

References


