



Artículos

Korean Cyberfeminism: emergence, characteristics and results

한국의 사이버 여성권리 및 인권. 출현, 특성 및 결과

Bárbara Bavoleo¹
Desirée Chaure²

Introduction

The massification and widespread of the available tools on Internet contributes to give shape and movement to the contemporary social and political life.

The variety of information and communication possibilities converges in the formation of groups and movements with shared interests and identities.

In this context, in the Republic of Korea, feminist groups have emerged and proliferated promoting their demands in a quickly, anonymous and simultaneous way and were nourished by the wide possibilities offered by the cyberspace.

The objective of this paper is to analyze the circumstances that motivated the conformation of these feminist groups on the web, defined under the conceptual frame-

¹ Coordinadora del CeCOR (IRI - UNLP)

² Integrante del CeCOR (IRI - UNLP)

work of cyberfeminism, its characteristics and the consequences of its actions at a cultural and political level. This information allows us to outline the possibilities of its future development.

The analysis dimensions include: the member's characteristics, the collaboration's types, the topics of interest, the action's modalities, and the positioning with respect to the LGBT community.

We consider that cyberfeminism has gained considerably social importance in South Korea and has influenced public opinion, also affecting the establishment of public policy agenda.

The methodological approach, of qualitative nature, is nourished by previous own research, specialized literature, and information collected/gathered from IT tools that provide/allow the analysis of our object of study.

This paper considers contextual variables, such as the internet expansion and the feminism history in the country, in order to analyze the structuration of the feminist movement online.

The general results achieved about cyberfeminism in Korea are focus on the member's characteristic, the types of collaboration between its members, the topics of interest, the modality of action and their positioning with respect to the demands of the LGBT community in the feminist struggle.

Based on the outcomes of the investigation, it concludes with recommendations on how the South Korean feminism can influence society and promote public demonstrations that can result in changes in public policies. It also reflects on the intervention of online groups and the gender dynamics on the internet, which are strongly shaped by globalization.

Contextual variables

Internet expansion

Nowadays globalization and technological advances have allowed the construction of a new society based on information and represented by a network that unites millions of computers and electronic devices, through shared standards and computer protocols. This structure inserted in the paradigm of the digital era, links technology knowledge, data processing and telecommunications.

The network is composed by websites, videos, videoconferences, email lists, postings, data centers and discussion forums with a wide variety of topics, where members exchange ideas, obtaining support or rejection from other members and shaping online communities.

Within this scheme the ways of social participation have been simplified, given the immediacy of the connection, because only with a computer and Internet it is possible to access cyberspace, from any part of the world.

The exchange of free information provides equality among its users, all are potential speakers and participants, opens areas of involvement for citizens in different processes, leaving aside traditional forms of political participation. Also anonymity increase equity and foster creativity and dialogue, by allowing the expression of unpopular opinions.

Likewise, the costs and resources needed to promote collective action have been greatly reduced, transforming cyberspace into a mediator of political, economic and cultural processes. This creates new forms of social interaction and reconfigures main actor's modes of action.

In terms of users, young people have the greatest access to the network, since it requires certain knowledge and computer skills.

The Internet connection in South Korea started in 1982, thanks to the joint effort of the Institute of Electronic Technology, the National University of Seoul and the Institute of Advanced Science and Technology.

The first website was created in 1992 and two years later the first private Internet service provider was established in the country, allowing the development of government sites, e-mail and web search engines. Such was the growth that at the end of the 90's there were more than 15.000 cybercafés, whereas the service of broadband that worked through cable TV networks, provided more than eleven million users in 2004³.

In addition with the objective of the inclusion of different social sectors, the Government implemented plans and programs to reduce the gap of access conditions and technical skills between citizens⁴. As a positive consequence the rural areas had 74.7% of broadband users in 2010 and more than 80% Korean population use the Internet.

One characteristic to consider is that women connect to the network approximately 10% less than men. This lower participation caused online disadvantages, for example that until the year 1997 the online newsletter *Chamsesang*, discusses various issues but didn't have articles about women or address to them, and until 2013 less than 10% of the articles dealt with gender issues⁵.

3 Bavoleo, 2013: Pág. 12

4 Los programas incluían cursos de computación, distribución de computadoras y acceso a Internet para los sectores bajos. Entre 2000 y 2002 más de ocho millones de personas, incluyendo ancianos, amas de casa y presos, fueron capacitados.

5 Choi, 2006: Page. 69

Internet plays a key role in Korean politics, being used as a tool to promote mobilizations, achieve national calls, coordinate dispersed groups and make visible announcements and demonstrations. The online debate can be expanded through different applications of horizontal and decentralized communication.

The importance of online activism provoked a government response that proposed measures of censorship and Internet control. But cyberspace has resources that allow users to escape from government control, that's why many users migrate to other platforms.

Currently South Korea is considered a worldwide leader nation in the development of telecommunications and Internet services, through cell phones and fiber optic transmitters. Thus the prices of the service are among the lowest in the world, and have high competitiveness in the technology market.

As a result of the IT changes, the increase in political participation and the new structure in the conformation of social movements, a third and new feminist group have appeared identified as "guerrilla" or "indie". It presents more radical initiatives and is composed mostly of students, who perform controversial activities, such as the festival of menstruation or lectures on sexual harassment.

Also when a case of violence against women occurs, activists organize flash-mobs at subway stations, press conferences in front of the courts, online campaigns and discussions, transforming the movement into cyberfeminism.

Feminism history in South Korea

Through the Korean history have emerged different groups who fight for gender equality, in a society where certain behavior and rules positioned women in a disadvantage place.

The first movements conformed by women appeared in the begging of XIX century, In 1898 the newspaper *Tongnip Shinmun* published a report written by the *Ch'an-yanhoe* organization, composed by women from aristocracy. The text considered the first declaration of women right in Korea and supported the idea of creating a secular school for girls.

In 1906 we find another association of women called *Yo u hor*, which had demanded to the Government the abolition of concubinage, and periodically organized debates about the social role of women in society.

Later during the Japanese colonization the priority of women's groups was given to issues related to democracy and nationalism, emphasizing autonomy and independence.

Also other kinds of organizations appeared, such as a group known as *Sinyoosoong* or new women. Its members came from middle and high classes, and were educated mostly in missionary schools, opened by teachers for United States who arrived to Korea in the last years of the *Choson* period, when one of the monarchy policies was to bring west education to the peninsula.

Sinyoosoong opposed to the traditional values of the family system, the arranged marriage and the sexual morality, therefore their members wished to live on their own terms and in a new reality where women could decide for themselves. Some of their most famous members were *Kim Won ju*, *Kim Myong sun* and *Na Hye sok*.

Constitutional reform of 1948 incorporated women vote and their right to take political seats. And in 1960 the Parliament approved the first Code that sustained the gender equality. Despite this improvements the Family Law of 1958, that regulated the property transmission and kinship, still maintained the concept of “family householder”. Under this law men had legal rights to register every member in the family book/record, which granted social identity, and these rights were transmitted only by male offspring.

In the 60’s the industrialization process promoted by President Park Chung brought a change in the family centered society and therefore the women’s role. Korea experienced a variation in the values between generations in a short period of time.

Women were mobilized as work labor in order to increase the national income, opening the female participation in the economic development.

As a response of this new reality feminist groups turned their demands on labor rights, displayed as workers strikes, and adopted *Minjung*⁶ ideology as the dominant paradigm. Groups were conformed mainly by students, labor unionists, intellectuals and religious members.

In the ’70 decade the feminist movements increased and developed worldwide, this widespread also reached the Korean territory. Besides women’s rights the Korean movement included the democratic issue, even using political demonstrations at local levels.

We find different female associations such as the “Korean League of Women Voters” which advocated to equal education, the “Women’s Union for the Reform of Family Law” created in 1973 and the “Friends’ Society for Women Equality” of 1983.

⁶ Minjung (People) was a popular ideology that proposed the rise of democracy, the elimination of social classes and authoritarianism, in order to fight against political oppression and economic exploitation.

Finally with the arrival of democracy, the restoration of civil rights, the reform of electoral legislation and the first free elections in 1987; the movement distanced itself from the nationalist struggle and dedicated exclusively to the matter of gender equality and female rights.

They started to acquire certain legitimacy, internationalized the domestic problems and got involved in electoral politics. Their demands focus on labor rights, education, sexual and organization equality, fight against prostitution and anti sex tourism, mainly from Japan; Also included some specific topics as abortion, contraception, self-defense and labor unions.

They held discussion meetings with experts and politicians, as well as conferences to raise social awareness. Some of these organizations were the "Union of Korean Women's Associations", integrated by more than twenty feminist organizations, the "Association of Women for Equality and Peace", the "Association of Women for Democracy and Sisterhood" and the "Association of United Working Women".

At first Korean feminism was classified in relation to their ideology, they were Marxists or socialists, but from the 90's on it was divided in two wide factions: radicals and reformers.

Radicals have been identified with issues such as human rights, for example prisoners' torture, comfort women⁷ and also with Korean reunification. It's mostly conformed by young women who use non-conventional tactics, like demonstrations and strikes.

In recent years had emerged new feminist associations dedicated to the defense of human rights and social minorities, such as foreign workers, lesbians, sex workers and disabled. For example the "Center for Human Rights of Immigrant Women", "Women in Solidarity for Similitude through Difference", "Solidarity with the Women's Liberation", and the "Cultural Collective for Sexual Minorities".

Mostly they belong to the "Association of Women's United", that lead the interaction between groups and manage their integration.

On the other hand **Reformist** are considered as mainstream and conservative, they do support political change and elimination of restrictions on individual freedom, but maintaining some traditional characteristics of women in society. They are usually aligned to the political party in power and have important lobby activities.

Many of them are affiliated to the "Korean Council of Women's Organizations", a government institution that responds to patriarchal political interests. This council controlled the groups' behavior and guided the members' participation.

⁷More than 200,000 women were taken away by force, to be subjected of sexual slavery in centers for Japanese military forces. Having been treated as a material resource, after the war most of them couldn't reintegrate into society, attempting against their lives or secluding in their homes.

In the decade of 90' both feminist factions worked for a common topic, gender violence.

The Criminal Code categorized rape as "crimes against chastity ", this definition not only stigmatized the victim, but didn't include punishable sanctions to perpetrators.

The beginning of the debate about sexual violence generated strong repercussions, due to the shared belief in society that the loss of chastity was a moral punishment. Because of this social idea, many women refused to report abuses or committed suicide to avoid dishonor.

They promoted the creation of the "Committee for the enactment of the law against sexual violence" and the "Assistance Center for victims of sexual, verbal, marital, exposure and harassment violence ".

In order to confront the problem promoted public talks, sex education programs and also did translations of material about rape, harassment and child abuse.

These activities led to the participation of feminists organizations in the international scene, such as the United Nations Women Conference, where the low status the Korean women in comparison with other nations was shown. The exposure of the negative indicators promoted a gender policy in the government agenda.

Thus the increment of influence in their claims, managed to advance through gender legislation. In 1993 the "Domestic Violence Prevention Law", in 1995 the "Basic Law for the Development of Women", in 2001 the "Maternity Law" that granted maternity leave, the "Prevention of Prostitution Law", the "Law of Punishment of Causes of Prostitution and Associated crimes" in 2004, the "Act of Prohibition of Gender Discrimination", "Act of equality in employment" and the "Act of protection for children and young people against sexual abuse ".

Additionally in relation to the topic of comfort women was created the "Korean Council for Women forced to Military Sex Slavery", conformed by more than 36 women's organizations, which in 1993 managed to grant of a pension for the victims.

The arrival of western ideas of feminism in South Korea influenced the emergence of new groups and study programs. Despite this many women who participate in the movement pursue reforms far from the modern notions and values identified with the West, and they feel closer to Korean traditional social relations.

However, gender problems such as inequality, labor exploitation and sexual violence, are universalized, and concern to all women. An example is the fact that the most common anxiety causes in Korean women are violence, insecurity and unemployment.

Emergence of Cyberfeminism in Korea

Cyberfeminism refers to a body of theories, debates and practices that link gender issues and feminist struggle with digital culture.

It proposes a place with free access to women where they can face the patriarchal system present in nowadays society, by creating a new culture on the network.

Institutional and financial low barriers allow a free distribution of knowledge about feminism. At the same time the lack of restrictions on mobility and no limitations of access, allow the foundation of a feminist social conscience, where negotiation and discussion among the members of the community abandon the pre-established cultural concepts.

According to Daniels (2009) cyberfeminism can be distinguished between old and new. The first one is characterized by a utopian vision where women breaks patriarchy through the network, while the new one battle from the bases against the dominant power, a more objective point of view.

Cyberfeminism allows women to take control and appropriate of technology as an instrument of empowerment, increasing activism through electronic communications.

Internet surpasses States, institutions, political opposition, indifference of media and economic power, this scene opens a new arena for gender activism, driven by key actors. Within the network it doesn't matter economic level or cultural privilege, everyone collaborate and create coalitions for social and political change. It allows the involvement of women in various fields, such as labor, education, domestic life, civic participation, feminist art and even entertainment and games online.

Korean women had begun to change their attitudes towards their role in society, but it is still difficult to fight some cultural expectations. Hence Internet has started to be used as an instrument in order to promote the feminist movement.

One of the first feminist web pages launched in the 1990s was *Dalara Talsepo* (<http://dalara.jinbo.net/>), organized by a group of students and addressed to an audience composed by students and young workers. It worked successfully for some years due to low entry costs of the page, which was self-managed by the participants, had scarce production costs and was financed through memberships and donations. The members sought to establish a non-hierarchical participation based on democratic principles; hence they abandon honorifics and used pseudonyms. To create a space of security for women, they created the Bulletin for Women, where aggressive comments were eliminated in order to generate a respectful and friendly dialogue. They also showed solidarity with other feminist movements, providing technological assistance to them, like banners design, web pages and events online.

A few years later *Unninet* (<http://unninet.co.kr/>) a webzine or online magazine was created. It was composed by young feminists, with the objective of reducing proliferation of violence against women in advertisement and online sites, such as abusive comments, distribution of images of objectification and obscene material.

Unlike *Dalara Talsepo*, it tried to become popular and started to search financing by publishing articles in newspapers and other media.

One of its goals is to expand the feminist network that is why their members offered their office room to those feminist groups who needed a space to work.

Through the construction of an alternative community, *Unnitet* proposed to show the potential of the Internet to increase free expression and female empowerment. As can be seen when users create a profile, exchange messages and tell the daily experiences and conflicts they suffer because of gender relation.

It also incorporated the debate on gender discrimination on online expression mechanisms, which often make information invisible and condemn feminist positions. It decided to provide information that is hard to find because of cultural rejection, such as abortion, health issues or sexuality.

Also it helps women to overcome their traumas, by reading the same experiences suffered by other women.

In 1999 the page was awarded by the "Korean Women's Foundation", an organization that seeks to improve the status of women, and in 2003 it was registered as a large-scale feminist non-governmental organization.

One of the topics discussed in *Unninet* was harassment and sexual violence, that's why following the model of struggle "night's claim" proposed in the '70s, and along with eight other organizations it sought to promote a safe environment for women during the night, a place where they can go out and feel safe.

Among the movements that appeared in online format, there is *WomenLink* (<http://www.womenlink.or.kr/>). In 2001 it led an analysis about the state budget in gender issues, showing that only few resources were assigned to these policies. Together with academics, it proposed a budget model for gender policies, in seven Korean local administrations and national ministries, which was presented to the United Nations Development Program.

One of the most popular and controversial groups arose in 2015, under the name of *Megalia* (<http://www.megalian.com/>). It aims to address feminist issues from a controversial perspective, by strongly questioning online misogyny through different practices. Therefore this group can be identified as "guerrilla" feminism.

Megalia came up in response to a wave of criticism focused in two women who were perceived as responsible for spreading MER virus into Korea. And also as a counterweight to *Ilbe* web page, where its members attack those social sectors that they

perceived as a threat to traditional Korean customs; they are openly misogynistic, xenophobic and even marginalize fellow citizens from poorer regions such as *Jeolla*. It activity was so problematic that received more than 1.500 requests from the Government to remove offensive posts⁸.

Members of *Megalia* invented a dictionary to satirize online vocabulary used to discriminate women, for example in the misogynist webpages, women are called Kimchi Girl pointing that are genetically predisposed to live from men, in contrast feminist created the term Troll Boy, alleging that men are genetically predisposed to abuse women. Likewise, terms such as Corseted were used to describe women who try to reach the Korean ideal of submissive and obedient woman, in contrast with De-corseted, as those women who fight against patriarchal impositions. Other satirized terms include Papa, referring to Korean men who have extramarital children in Southeast Asian countries and abandon them; and Dead old Sister, alluding to the recurrent practice of selective abortion of female fetuses.

The webpage promulgated the use of mirroring, where users act and comment online imitating the discourse and male chauvinist attitudes, the members treat men as they treat women.

It also started to commercialize feminist products with different phrases and logos. One of the situations that caused commotion in relation to their products took place when an actress who worked in the videogame company Gamergate, with predominantly men users, was fired from her job for uploading a photograph with a *Megalia* t-shirt that stated "Women don't need a prince. "

After a series of internal conflicts over the page's positioning in relation to men, in 2016 it ended splitting up in two groups. One composed by those who supported the demands of homosexual community, including gay men, called *Ladism* (<http://cafe.daum.net/ladism/>); and on the other hand those who rejected any claim that included male gender formed *Womad* (<https://womad.life/>), with radical features.

Bwave is a recent coalition of online feminist groups, which among other campaigns it released the so-called "I am not a baby vending machine, I am a human being" in 2016. As a response to the publication from the Ministry of Interior about a birth map, where the cities and towns were ranked in relation to the statistics of childbearing age's women. After a few hours the publication was modified, but the protest did not stop, as the activists believe that the responsibility for the low birth rate in South Korea doesn't depend only on women, because as a social problem it should be address by public policies, such as paternity leave.

⁸ Korea Times, 2017. http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2017/11/181_238520.html

There two main themes on Korean cybermenism agenda nowadays, abortion and spy-cams.

Abortion is illegal since 1953, except in case of rape, threat to pregnant woman's health, or severe defects in the fetus; and it always require the father consent. Despite this the government didn't apply sanctions neither considered it a crime, because it helped to sustain family planning state programs, but recently pro-life and religious groups pushed for greater control, additionally to the present social stigmatization of women who abort, identified as immoral.

In 2016 several groups, including *BWave*, projected the "Black Sunday", following the concept of pro-choice polish movement composed by feminists and human rights activists who called for complete legalization of abortion. Characterized by black clothing, those who supported abortion legalization posted photos dressed in black with the hashtag "My body my choice", also the use of *Daum* Portal allowed the spread of information about the activity. There were 4 protests where more than 11.000 signatures were collected online and 650 personally.

In 2017 the online petition to legalize abortion, submitted to the Presidential bureau, obtained more than 200.000 signatures⁹. The Government offered an official statement arguing that society had to find a balance between women's rights and fetus's rights.

The second problem is spy-cams, hidden cameras that men use to record scenes of women without their consent, and upload the images to Internet as a porn bizarre genre called *molka*. The cameras have been found in lighters, cell phones or lamps, and are placed in areas such as public bathrooms, transportation or locker rooms. Once images are uploaded on the network, are replicated and distributed making it impossible to eliminate them in the future.

Cyberfeminism pleads that one cause of the problem lies in the structural discrimination of the justice system, since this kind of crime is rarely judged. Between 2012 and 2017 more than 20.900 cases were reported and only 2.6% of suspects were arrested, while in 2015 24.5% of sex crimes involved cameras¹⁰.

Therefore in 2016 *Megalia* decided to apply mirroring, through a campaign of hidden cameras in men's restrooms, where they took photos without their consent that

9 New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/13/world/asia/south-korea-abortion-ban.html>

10 KoreaExpose, 2018.
<https://www.koreaexpose.com/south-koreas-biggest-womens-protest-in-history-is-against-spycam-porn/>

later were displayed on posters in the subway, like the well-known porn webpage *Sora-Net* used to do with women's photos. This action had such impact that the pornographic webpage, active for more than 15 years, was closed.

In June of 2018 another strong campaign was promoted on *Daum* Portal, feminist groups and citizens participated in the march "Uncomfortable Courage" to protest against *molka* and spy-cams. More than 22.000 people demonstrated at the *Hyehwa* Station in Seoul, with banners with the message "my life is not your porn", and more than 400.000 people signed the online petition for equal justice.

Finally regarding the MeToo # Movement, it had strong implications in South Korea. It initiated when prosecutor *Seo Ji-hyeon* wrote online that she had suffered sexual abuse in her work, from part of a superior, and no one of her colleagues did anything and later she was demoted after filing a complaint. This declaration initiated a wave of publications of women who experienced similar situations, from university students to journalists like *Lim Bo-young* and Congresswoman *Lee Hyo-kyeong* of *Gyeonggi-do*, who reported her story through Facebook.

Twitter is another social network that Koreans use to express themselves, since 2016 the hashtag # 00 계 내 성폭력 (# abuse sexual en 00) became viral; the 00 in the hashtag represent the industry where the abuse took place. The most used were arts and literature, the latter had such an impact that all the cases published were compiled in a book entitled "Without References"¹¹.

The response of the Government to the #MeToo initiative didn't take long to come; President Moon declared that "With the Me Too movement, our society is in the midst of a crucial change. [...] The movement is leading Korea toward a society in which sexual equality and women's rights are realized and the dignity of all people is respected."

"We are now reflecting how deeply the structure of sexual discrimination is entrenched in our society and are facing up to the reality that this is by nature about routine discrimination and oppression against vulnerable people. [...]"It is time for the state to answer to the voices of these women."¹²

Cyberfeminism is also represented in the participation of small online groups, such as *Femidea*, a forum where international articles about feminism are translated into Korean, with the aim of making gender equality ideas accessible to all.

11 KoreaBoo, 2018.

<https://www.koreaboo.com/news/south-korea-gets-behind-hollywoods-powerful-metoo-movemen/>

12 Korea Herald, 2018. <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20180304000261>

In addition women use other elements to express these problems, such as cell phone applications. *Blind* application was created to report cases of abuse and had been downloaded more than one million women, one of the reasons for its success is anonymity, because avoids any reprisals. On its first day when it was release, more than 500 cases were posted, ranging from sexist jokes to workplace harassment.

Despite the improvements achieved, within the online system there is a problem, despite the fact that gender limits had been reduced, the current social construction continues to manifest and participates in the network, as part of the online community that rejects feminism.

When gender issues are treated on the web, some discussions in the forums end up deteriorating into positions that censor female perspectives and reaffirm male privileges.

The online anti-feminist sentiment divides women into two groups, between those who represent the feminine ideal of submission and delicacy, versus those that challenge the established order and are seen as a threat. Causing what many media call the "war of the sexes in the digital age."

The main difficulty suffered by women linked to the feminist pages is that they were socially considered as promoters of misandry, and also in order to discredit and reject their activities they were called *chong bok*¹³.

For example, in 1999 the official website of Ewha University supported the abolition of the "extra points" that were given to men in the labor evaluations as a reward for their military service. Because of this, the page suffered a wave of critical comments and a collective attack that terrorized the university community.

Another well-known case is that of a member of *Megalia* who belonged to the Armed Forces and when she made public her feminist opinions on Facebook, was criticized for lack of patriotism and hatred towards men. The biggest problem was that she received disciplinary measures and salary reduction, just for having exercised her freedom of expression.

Analysis Results

From the aforementioned analysis we can identify the characteristics of the Korean cyberfeminism. For the analysis we will take the following dimensions: Member's

13 Term used to designate supporters of North Korea and followers of the Juche ideology.

characteristics, Collaboration's types, Topics of interest, Action's modalities, Action's modalities and Positioning with respect to the LGBT community.

Member's characteristics

Cyberfeminism is composed almost exclusively by female students and professionals.

The knowledge that requires the use of Internet and social networks is one of the causes that make it easier for younger people to participate.

Also through the media we can see that those who participate in demonstrations in favor of abortion or against spy-cams are mostly young or middle-aged women.

The posts on social networks and web pages, without considering the anonymous ones, indicate the same tendency. The first ones to express their experiences on the #MeToo movement were also professionals and students.

Collaboration's types

Cooperation between its members assume online and offline spaces.

Online

The reason why it is mostly online is because maintains anonymity and free expression.

The typical activities online include promotion of webpages and the spread of information about feminist movement; money donations for campaigns and online petitions signatures; also the purchase of organization's products, like t-shirts or cups with feminist phrases or logos.

Offline

It denotes the participation in demonstrations, conferences and petition's signature.

Recently we could see this kind of participation in the #MeToo, abortion and spy-cams demonstrations. Despite the increase of the offline collaboration, it still has negative repercussions and it's problematic for the participants, who even cover their faces for fear of reprisals.

Topics of interest

There are three main characteristic that present the main issues of interest in Korean cyberfeminism, there are sensible topics and impulse the narration of self-experiences.

Sensible issues, feminist webpages share information of difficult access, such as abortive methods and sexuality. Society still considers some issues inappropriate or immoral,

which prevents women from receive education and knowing information about issues that directly affect them.

The first webpage that dealt with this issue was *Unnitet*, and later many more followed the initiative. Furthermore the fight against spy-cams was called “uncomfortable courage”, showing that the issue wasn't openly spoken of by society. The displays of feminist's demonstrations changed this reality.

Self-experiences, most of participants told their stories of abuse because the principle of anonymity was respected, and it helped to avoid any criticism. But on the other hand the #MeToo movement was started by women who were brave enough to tell their terrible experiences in front of a camera and the whole society.

Action's modalities

The modalities through which the groups act can be divided in active and passive.

Active, refers to those activities that incorporate a more energetic and dynamic participation, such as the use of mirroring started by *Megalia*, or the mobilization of activists in demonstrations.

An example of a webpage more active it's *Womad*, they do daily postings and report cases of online misogyny.

Passive, are those groups which their feminist activities are subtle, like reading clubs or webpages dedicated to the translation of feminist texts. An example of this case is *Fem-idea* or the *Doing Cafe*, an open feminist library that also promotes its collection on Facebook.

Positioning with respect to the LGBT community

The cyberfeminist take two positions in relation to LGBT community, integration or rejection.

Integration, when the demands of the LGBT community are incorporated to the feminist struggle, they support the LGBT movement and collaborate in joint activities. This can be seen on recent demonstrations where the LGBT flag was present, as their activist.

Rejection, it's a branch of the feminist movement which consider that only women can be the subject of feminist debate.

The dispute between both positions was manifested in the dissolution of *Megalia*, where the webpage was separated among *Ladism* in favor of LGBT movement and *Womad* which reject any participation of gay people.

Conclusion

In the early days of the Internet, cyberfeminism was useful to fight feminist criticism and show the women's problems that were socially ignored. It helped to raise a familiar and comfortable space for women's expression and to enhance the enthusiasm of those who didn't have means to reproduce their thoughts and ideas about feminism.

Although the Asian countries have certain opposition to the feminist movement and especially in South Korea it has negative connotations, the cyberfeminism born of globalization and technological advancement has shown good results.

Participation has increased thanks to the cohesion and flexibility manifested throughout history. The groups have managed to acquire political legitimacy and a sense of solidarity, by means of a common identity and the variety of tactics used.

Nowadays the diversification of claims and the expansion in other platforms such as Facebook or Instagram, allows a greater visualization of social demands and the interconnection with other feminists groups beyond South Korea.

Feminist websites have become a space to share experiences and forms a connection, between the members of a growing movement.

To clearly express the actual changes observed in South Korea about the feminist struggle, in words of Professor *Kwak*, from the National University of Seoul, "Our society is experiencing the period of transition, from a patriarchal society heading towards a society of gender equality. That ought to create conflicts between men and women. But still there are so many instances where women feel unequal in this society and I think they are taking this opportunity to plead for gender equality." ¹⁴

That is why cyberfeminism is necessary in order to link the different feminist movements, by strengthening their ties and generating problems visualization. In order to reach the future objective of re-signify the social structure of beliefs and values, and promote a transformation to a more equal system, and therefore greater welfare for its citizens.

References

- Choi, Y., Steiner, L. y Kim, S. (2006). Claiming feminist space in Korean cyberterritory. *Javnost*, 13, 2, 65-84.

14 Korea Joong Daily, 2018.

<http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=3028276>

- Bavoleo Bárbara (2013). Trayectoria teórica de los estudios sobre política e internet. Revista Portes. Universidad de Colima
- Bavoleo Bárbara (2013). Contornos y trayectorias de internet en un país hiperconectado. El rol del Estado en la difusión tecnológica en Corea del Sur. Punto Cero, 18(26), 11-18.
- Bavoleo, Bárbara (2012). "Repertorios de participación ciudadana online. El caso de Corea del Sur y la conformación de la generación 2030", Administración y Ciudadanía, Egap, Xunta de Galicia. Vol. 7, Núm. 2. Pages. 49-65.
- Daniels J. (2009). Rethinking Cyberfeminism(s): Race, Gender, and Embodiment. The Feminist Press.
- Gajjala R. y Mamidipudi A. (1999) Cyberfeminism, technology, and international 'development', Gender and Development, 7:2, 8-16.
- Gajjala, R., y Oh, Y. J. (2012). Cyberfeminism 2.0. New York: Peter Lang Pub.
- Jones Nicola Anne (2006). The Korean Women's Movement: From Minjung Feminism to Gender Mainstreaming, pp. 45-66. En Gender and the Political Opportunities of Democratization in South Korea.
- Jongsuk Ham (2010) Fluctuating identities in cyberspace and cyberfeminism, A comparison of Philippine and Korean experiences. Review of Women's Studies Volume XX, Numbers 1-2.
- Jung, K. (2003). Practicing feminism in South Korea: The issue of sexual violence and the women's movement. Hecate, 261-284.
- Jung, K (2014). Practicing Feminism in South Korea. The women's movement against sexual violence. London: Routledge.
- Mikyoung, L. (2013). Korean Feminist NGOs' Strategies for the Empowerment of Women and Social Change: Focusing on the Anti-sexual Violence Movement. Peace and Culture, 5, 1, 85-106.
- Toyce Gelb-Marian Lief Palley (1994). Women of Japan and Korea: Continuity and Change, Series: Women in the Political Economy.
- In Defense Of Korean Feminism: Rise of Megalia and Other Online Communities, (2016) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHqwL2CAvz0>