

# ***The Case Analysis of Anita Hill and Christine Blasey Ford: The Reason of the Metoo Movement's Success***

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**Abstract:** The #Metoo movement, an anti-sexual harassment campaign, has been among the most effective campaigns in the past five years. To show how the #MeToo movement has the potential to change public perceptions of and responses to sexual harassment and assault, the paper will compare and contrast two cases, Anita Hill v. Clarence Thomas and Christine Blasey Ford v. Brett Kavanaugh. Additionally, this essay used Baker's theory to show that there are typically multiple forms of harassment present but that women may feel ashamed of sexual violence and are hesitant to speak out about it. Another issue is that in a society where men predominate, few victims of harassment by influential people dare to come out. The #MeToo movement is thriving, according to this essay's argument, because it encourages people to share their experiences in a safe setting and puts pressure on institutions to deal with sexual misconduct. Additionally, it increases public awareness of sexual assault and harassment. An essential and powerful viewpoint on women's awakening may be found in #Metoo.

**Keywords:** #Metoo, sexual harassment, Anita Hill, Christine Blasey Ford

## **1. Introduction**

In the last five years, women worldwide have been swept up in the #Metoo movement, making it possible for people to speak out about sexual harassment in public. The Metoo movement successfully changes people's attitudes toward sexual harassment. In the 19th-20th century, it is hard for women to speak up about those who suffer from sexual harassment. Many people, even the victims, regarded it as shameful and secret. In October 2017, following cases of the sexual assault scandal of American film producer Harvey Weinstein, actress Alyssa Milano played Samantha Micelli in *Who's the Boss? Took #Metoo* as a hashtag to encourage victims of sexual assaults to speak out bravely. Milano aimed to call on women who have suffered from sexual assault to stand forward and speak out about their experiences, post their understanding of how they experienced sexual harassment on social media, and then reply with "Metoo" to raise awareness of sexual harassment. Subsequently, #Metoo became a social revolution. Because of #Metoo, many women came to the stage and spoke out about their painful memories bravely.

# The core spirit of #Metoo could trace back to Tarana Burke, the first person who used "Metoo" in 2006. When building her non-government organizations, she believes that "Metoo" can express two meanings: "I am not ashamed" and "I am not alone." At the same time, it also claims: "I see you; I hear you, I understand you, and I am here for you, or I get it". Tarana Burke and Alyssa Milano have

laid the foundation for the success of #Metoo. This essay compares two cases to analyze the reason for the success of #Metoo. #Metoo is a shining show that stimulates women to recall their sexual harassment experiences to the public more confidently.

## 2. Literature Review

There are discrepancies between some of the reported observations about sexual harassment and the impact of #Metoo movement. Although some studies have revealed the role of race, ethnicity, and culture in childhood sexual abuse, there is little discussion on sexual harassment other than children [1]. Tarana Burke started the Metoo movement while launching a campaign against sexual violence in 2006 [2]. However, the action did not attract much attention until actress Alyssa Milano used the hashtag "Metoo" in protest against Harvey Weinstein's sexual harassment accusation. Since then, the #Metoo movement has gone viral on Twitter. The implicit reason for great attention to sexual harassment is that Alyssa Milano and Harvey are famous people with a robust public presence. Thus, many people started gossiping about this and focusing on sexual violence.

There are many studies discussing why #Metoo can sweep so far. Social media play significant, influential, and effective roles in meeting social expectations [3]. To be specific, Joy Leopold's paper explained why the #Metoo hashtag on Twitter could sweep across the world, while Tarana Burke's Metoo website remained obscure; this paper failed to consider specific details about why #Metoo movement can change people's attitudes toward the the the sexual harassment. At the same time, several theories have been focusing on #Metoo to raise awareness of sexual assaults, and others pay attention to the clash of sexes. According to some studies, #Metoo is based on capitalism within the parameters entirely detached from class and power [4-5]. In short, the literature about #Metoo strongly suggests that the exposure of real stories of sexual assault victims will make many people pay attention to sexual violence, and #Metoo changes manner because it raises awareness that harassment is an unacceptable and harmful behavior. However, some worried that #Metoo creates a battle of the sexes, which puts women and men in opposite, hostile positions and instigates a backlash response. The previous study of Dr. Szekeres and Dr. Leopold is inconclusive because it is inapplicable to everyone which is too subjective. Dr. Szekeres' paper has several limitations in the research method, which neither indicates the specific class of people nor clearly shows why the participants are predominantly white. Besides that, Dr. Szekeres's paper fails to consider why using social media, Twitter, helps expand the influence of the Metoo movement.

Did #metoo work or not? Calgary resident and human resources advisor Adrien Miller argues, "Putting #MeToo on my social media accounts does not do anything to create change." [6] Meanwhile, the movement could not have been a success and a better use of time. However, #Metoo is a successful movement that women have started to awaken, and #Metoo positively affects society.

One issue of this debate is that historical analysis is not used. This paper will compare two similar events at two different moments: Anita Hill before #Metoo and Christine Blasey Ford after #Metoo. Based on two cases of harassment shows the power of the Metoo Movement. To verify that #Metoo is a success and its success comes from the effective use of social media, this paper will compare the case of Anita Hill and Christine Blasey Ford. The similarity between these two cases is that their experiences are the same. In addition, the difference is that in the case of Anita Hill, people oppugned her and did not support her, and no one stood up for her. However, in the case of Christine Blasey Ford, many people started to help and sympathize with Ford's situation.

## 3. The Successful #Metoo Movement

A lot of women around the world have experienced sexual harassment. However, due to the feeling of shame or privacy, few women choose to stand out to share their sexual harassment experiences. In

2006, Tarana Burke tried to change this situation by launching “Metoo” movement. Though Tarana Burke used empathy to invite victims to share their stories, her “Metoo” campaign remained in oblivion, as victims still felt uncomfortable sharing their stories. The purpose of #Metoo action was to encourage victims to share their experiences on social media and to raise people’s awareness of how common sexual assault exists. Many Twitter users acted accordingly. At the same time, some actresses, such as Gabrielle Union, swept #Metoo across the world and sparked discussions to propel social changes. As stories are shared on Twitter and other social media, victims rediscover the prevalence of sexual harassment. Therefore, #Metoo movement makes it less likely for people to regard sexual harassment as a rare happening. Instead, #Metoo helps people realize that sexual harassment is so common and traumatic that it needs to be addressed.

Given that society is patriarchal and men are physically stronger than women, the #MeToo movement brings the issue of sexual harassment into a hot discussion spot. Indeed, the #Metoo movement draws more attention to sexual harassment issues and leads more people, both men, and women, to take the issue seriously. This paper will compare two famous sexual harassment cases: Anita Hill & Christine Blasey Ford, to show the success of #Metoo movement.

#### 4. Case of Anita Hill

Before the #Metoo movement, sexual harassment was deemed shameful and should be dismissed and forgotten as privacy. It was thought that sexual harassment was rare and one suffering from sexual assault should feel disgraced. Therefore, it would be a great shock if anyone bravely spoke about sexual harassment in public, and the first response was to raise doubt about the verity of the case.

When Anita Hill testified against Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas, she suffered from much disbelief and disrespect. As no lawyer was willing to act on her behalf, she had to stand in front of 10 white males and answer their insulting and disrespectful questions. “He talked about pornographic materials depicting individuals with large penises or large breasts involving various sex acts” [7]. These questions were embarrassing because they were considered impolite and disgusting, but Anita Hill had to answer them accordingly. However, her answers were labeled by the media as “a little nutty and a little slutty” [8-9]. Anita faced disbelief from both men and women. “They couldn’t believe she was a shrinking violet. They rejected her as a victim [10].” even J.C. Alvarez, Thomas's assistant at the EEOC (the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) portrayed Hill as “ambitious” one, indicating that Anita Hill accused some ambitious aim. Given that she acts like an “everywoman” herself, women doubted that Hill would condone sexual harassment, and they thought that she had the right to refuse explicitly.

Anita not only encountered disbelief from the general public but also met doubts and problems in her work and in the academic community. “The absence of emotion makes people suspect,” said Thomas Kochman, author of “Black and White Styles in Conflict”. This was mainly because, at that time, being sexually harassed was generally considered a shame and was commonly assumed as women’s fault, and if one was so unfortunate to be harassed, it should be better kept in secrecy. According to a Chicago Defender Poll by Tara Locke, “some of the respondents believe that her students and co-workers will view her in a different light after the confirmation hearings” and “create friction in her classroom and her relations in the academic community”, because people already hold a negative attitude toward her, even stereotypes [11].

Back in 1991, when people deemed sex as a taboo topic and sexual harassment as a shameful and privacy-sensitive thing, Anita Hill's testimony against Clarence Thomas was not taken seriously initially. Instead, she suffered from disrespect and disbelief from all circles.

#### 5. Case of Christine Blasey Ford

Possibly under the enlightenment of #MeToo movement, Christine Blasey Ford, Professor of Psychology at Palo Alto University, spoke out about her traumatic experiences of being sexually assaulted 36 years ago. On September 27, 2018, Christine Blasey Ford appeared in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee. He accused U.S. Supreme Court nominee Justice Brett Kavanaugh that the nominee tried to sexually assault her 36 years ago in high school [12]. "Ultimately, I did owe it to this country's citizenry, future generations, and others to share the information". For Ford, the desire to go into the spotlight did not propel her to recount her sexual assaults by Kavanaugh. Instead, the sense of being a dutiful citizen forced her to stand in front of the Committee and wage accusation against the nominee, "I don't know how to phrase it, but a calling from the country or from my civic duty as a citizen that I had to say something" [13].

Christine Blasey Ford was lucky because her claims and testimony were taken seriously. Both Anita Hill and Ford are prominent figures in fighting against sexual harassment and sexual assaults, yet they received diverse responses from the public. In 1991, though some supported Anita Hill, she was generally considered an "ambitious" or "man hater". By contrast, Ford's story was taken seriously. Kavanaugh's confirmation was delayed until an investigation was conducted to examine whether Ford's accusation was true thoroughly. Besides, prominent traditional media like Catholic Magazine America ceased to support Kavanaugh, though Kavanaugh repeatedly denied the accusation. Republican Senator Chuck Grassley, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, praised Ford for her courage to stand out and relate the details of the charge. Ex-president Trump thought that Ford's accusation was credible and even called Ford "a wonderful woman" and a "credible witness". Ford even replaced Kavanaugh as the protagonist in the nomination narrative. To victims of sexual harassment and sexual assault, Ford's testimony worked like a live invitation to encourage them to speak up, although the guilty man was in great power or the harassment was done long ago. People will listen and show compassion rather than disbelief and sneer about sharing old stories. That's a marked shift from 1991 when Americans sided with then-Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas after Anita Hill's accusation of his sexual harassment. Besides, NPR Audie Cornish conversed with Anita Hill and Christine Blasey Ford to recognize their contribution to campaigns against sexual harassment and sexual assaults. "I was struck by the fact that they understood their role as people who were in many ways protecting the sanctity of the Supreme Court and were willing to" "I'm a sexual assault survivor, so I also see it as so deeply moving. I'm completely grateful to two of them for making that sacrifice on behalf of all of us". Therefore, #MeToo's change is successful.

## 6. Conclusion

Sexual harassment and sexual assaults have become critical problems globally [14]. However, subject to the conventional idea that sexual harassment and sexual assaults are rare and private, survivors tended to keep the hurt a secret. In 2017, traditional conceptions of sexual harassment were changed, as global survivors of sexual harassment used #MeToo hashtag on social media like Twitter or WeChat to share their stories. Then, # the seemingly simple action of #MeToo became a tremendous social movement. With #MeToo hashtag on social media, women worldwide bravely share their stories and contribute to the war against sexual harassment. #MeToo movement encourages victims of sexual harassment to share their stories instead of keeping sexual harassment secrecy on the victims' part. At the same time, "the #MeToo movement accomplishes what sexual harassment law to date has not. This mass mobilization against sexual abuse, through an unprecedented wave of speaking out in conventional and social media, is eroding the two biggest barriers to ending sexual harassment in law and life: the disbelief and trivializing dehumanization of its victims" [15].

Social media are important platforms for people to share daily life and community ideas about society [16]. Studies have proved that social media plays a very influential role in communicating ideas among different groups. The readings and comments on postings help social media users

understand society's expectations of acceptable behavior. By repeatedly sharing, commenting on, and writing about experiences or running against social expectations, social media users can disclose certain offense happenings and advocate for action. This is precisely why #Metoo successfully changes people's conception of sexual harassment. Through repeated #Metoo movements, women worldwide put their stories of sexual harassment and sexual assaults onto the Internet. By sharing, they understand that sexual harassment is common and there is no need to hide it in secrecy and keep being tortured by the traumas left.

Overall, #Metoo is a success, as it draws sexual harassment into the light and makes it comfortable for people to discuss and fight against it. Meanwhile, the response of Anita Hill and Christine Blasey Ford (brave women to stand out and speak out against sexual harassment against men in power) proves this. However, the #Metoo movement has made people realize that sexual harassment is prevalent. Hence, people take Christine Blasey Ford's accusation seriously. Despite the persistence of sexual abuse issues worldwide, a historical analysis of Anita Hill's case and Christine Blasey Ford's case clarifies that #Metoo movement has positively affected the perception of those issues.

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