Fan Activism: K-Pop Fans Movement in Thailand's 2020 Protests

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ABSTRACT

Fans of Korean pop music, known as K-Popers, are not only famous for their preference for music and idol artists, but also for their social movements. K-Pop fans can form social movements that can mobilize the resources they have to attract public sympathy to participate. As well as its massive social movement actions because it is distributed through virtual media and is not only concentrated in one area, but is carried out across national borders. Social movements by K-Popers also continue into the political sphere. One of them is the involvement of K-Popers in political protests in Thailand in 2020. K-pop fans are emerging as a powerful political force in Thailand's anti-government movement. Massive demonstrations took place demanding major political changes. The growing pro-democracy movement is calling for the resignation of Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, called for curbs on the king's powers, demanding constitutional amendments, new elections and an end to the harassment of rights activists and state critics. This paper aims to explain how K-Popers is involved in the rejection movement in Thailand in 2020.This paper uses a qualitative research method. The data used in this paper comes from secondary sources such as government official web- sites and international media coverage. By using the concept of social movement, new social movement theory and cyberactivism, the author finds that K-Popers utilize social media in their movements. Politics is not their main focus but social care and solidarity that makes them move together.

Keywords: Activism, Cyberactivism, Korean Wave, K-Pop Fans, Political Protest, Social Movement, Thailand

INTRODUCTION

The K-Pop phenomenon as part of the Korean Wave also gave rise to a group of fans called K-Popers. K-Popers are fans or fandom, which is a group of people who have an interest in the same field and goal, which is to support their K-Pop idol. Fandom play an active role in connecting their world with the characters of their idols. Not only liking the works of their idols, they also support the careers of idol artists starting from watching music concerts or watching films and participating in various idol activities. These groups of K-Pop fans can interact and form high solidarity as a

fan identity. They understand that as fans their activity have important contribution to their idol (Jenol and Pazil, 2020). Apart from interacting directly, K-Popers also use social media networks to interact, either with fellow fans or looking for information about their idols. K-Popers are known to have a strong influence on social media.

The massive use of social media by K-Poppers has led them to become active in social movements on virtual media. K-Popers are not only famous for their preference for idol music and artists but also for their social movements. Social movements are intended to encourage or inhibit social change (Macionis, 1999). The involvement of K-Pop fans in social movement to show their concern and for charitable purposes is nothing new. K-Pop fans form social movements that can mobilize the resources they have in attracting public sympathy to participate. Various social and humanitarian issues both nationally and internationally become their concern starting from environmental campaigns, fundraising for natural disasters and other social activities.

An interesting phenomenon related to social movements and activism carried out digitally by K-Popers is exploring political issues. K-Pop fans involved in the Black Lives Matter BLM movement, namely protests against racism and police brutality that occurred in the United States (Lee and Kao, 2021). Even though the Black Lives Matter movement started in the United States, K-Pop fans around the world are also involved in this movement. Furthermore, K-Popers were also involved in political protests in Thailand in 2020.

The demonstrators are demanding sweeping political changes including the resignation of prime minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, a former army chief who came to power after a 2014 coup. In addition, the demonstrators are demanding constitutional amendments, new elections as well as an end to harassment of human rights activists and state critics. They also advocated for the king's powers to be limited. The impetus for the fans to act was the police crackdown on the October 16, 2020 demonstration which used water cannons to disperse protesters. Police want to disperse demonstrators who oppose the ban, demand curbs on the monarchy's powers and aim to end protests against Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocda.

K-Popers are present as an alternative actor in conveying their aspirations as a public representation. K-Popers, which was originally built based on fun and interest in their idols, in which K-Poppers have a connection and commitment to each other in fan activities, develop into a social movement. The form of social movement carried out by K-Popers can be an alternative solution for the community, in conveying their views on developing social issues. Through this research the author aims to examine how K-Popers carry out movements in political protests in Thailand in 2020. This paper will examine the intersection between cultural participation and socio-political participation.

Literature Review

The study of K-pop fan activism is not as extensive in the literature as the study of activism in general. This is because activism by K-pop fans categorized as new and contemporary issues on a global scale. Kim and Hutt (2021) examine K-pop fandom as a social movement through a case study of the South Korean boy band BTS, concluding that K-pop artists contribute to the participation of their fans, ARMY, in social advocacy. Through fan participatory culture theory and social movement theory, Kim and Hutt () 2021identify unique fan practices and the means of participation that they used, namely the innovative use of social media in mobilizing sociopolitical change. In addition, pop culture texts can be a means for young people to deal with resource shortages and to challenge the ruling status quo.

Developing from a social movement, Kang (2023) examines the involvement of K-Pop fans in international politics in South Korea with a focus on protests by Korean fandoms online during the trade dispute between Korea and Japan in 2019. K-Pop fans in South Korea call for boycott towards Japanese brands and products. In addition, some fandom demanded that entertainment agencies cancel concerts in Japan as part of a national boycott. This demand was made through various hashtags on Twitter such as #Cancel_Japan_Concert, #SM_EXO_cancel_Miyagi concert and #Pledis_cancel_Japan concert. Kang's research found that political issues between countries, namely the 2019 Korea-Japan trade dispute, forced K-Pop fans in South Korea to choose between fan loyalty to support their idol artists or patriotism in defending their country. Kang (2023) stated that K-pop functions as a space where Korean fans imagine alternative identities as fan groups or as the embodiment of collective nationalistic attitudes.

The involvement of K-Pop fans has also penetrated into political issues in other countries, such as the Black Lives Matters campaign, Donald Trump's campaign for the 2022 United States election and the rejection of the passage of the Omnibus Law in Indonesia. K-Pop fans and artists have become visible political actors in the Black Lives Matter Movement in the US in 2020 (Lee and Kao, 2021). Focusing on a case study of BTS and its fandom namely ARMY in the Black Lives Matter movement, Lee and Kao (2021) found that fandom can trigger political activity of artists, which in turn can trigger big political actions among fans. Thus, fans and artists are inspired by each other in supporting social movement.

K-Pop fans carry out online social activism by using Twitter on Donald Trump's campaign for the 2020 United States election and also a campaign to support Black Lives Matter. Through the theory of cyberactivism, 4 stages were found by K-Pop fans in their movement. The first is the triggering event stage, namely K-Pop fans as an issue trigger. In the second stage of media response, the media responds by sharing massive information. The third stage is the viral organization, where K-Pop fans respond to media coverage by providing information via Twitter massively, so

that many other fan groups and even the general public are involved in doing what K-Pop fans are doing. The last stage is the physical response, this stage allows for a physical response to occur. In this case, the reality of Donald Trump's campaign turned out to be that only a few attended, even though the distribution of his campaign tickets was informed that many supporters would attend. Whereas in the case of Black Lives Matter, there was a massive demonstration (Sidik and Rizky, 2021).

Fadillah et.al (2021) who examined the involvement of K-Pop fans in the rejection of the ratification of the Omnibus Law in Indonesia found that Indonesian K-Pop fans maximized their function as part of Indonesian citizens to express their political stance. Twitter is the main media where they show their political involvement when creating hashtags, organizing other K-Popper masses, and at the same time providing support to activists who reject the Omnibus Law.

The five literatures become the author's references in studying the involvement of K-Popers in social and political activism which is not only within the scope of one country such as in South Korea, Indonesia and the United States but also cross-border issues. Social media is the main media used in their various social movement activities, such as Twitter which is the focus of Lee and Kao's study (2021), Fadillah et.al (2021) and Kang (2023). However, none of the five literatures has examined the role of K-Pop fans in social movements against the government in Thailand, so this is a novelty that the author offers through this paper.

Theoretical Framework

In this paper the author uses the concepts of social movement and cyberactivism in analysing the involvement of K-Popers in political protests in Thailand. Social movement is one form of media relations with actors. Social movement is the most important type of collective behaviour (Macionis, 1999). Macionis (1999) states that social movements are organized activities that aim to encourage or inhibit social change. Cohen (1983) explains that what is meant by the term social movement is a movement carried out by a number of people who are organized in nature with the aim of changing or maintaining certain elements in society.

Cohen (1983) argues about the existence of several characteristics of a social movement which include: the existence of goals to be achieved (targets), planned and there is an ideology. Whereas the characteristics of social movements according to Wilson are in the form of organized collectively, with the aim of trying to make changes, a wide area of scope, methods of using non- institutional channels, and their nature does not limit people (Sukmana, 2016). According to Olson, social movements can occur when someone with others has the same interests, so they will act collectively to achieve what they believe in. In addition, social movements also have four characteristics in their movements, namely: collective challenges, common goals,

social solidarity, and sustainable interactions (Sandoval-Almazan and Gil- Garcia, 2014)

Cyberactivism is also inseparable from social movements. According to Langman et.al (2003), cyberactivism is the widespread use of the internet to provide conflicting information and inspire social mobilization. Cyberactivism can also be defined as social activism assisted by or based on the use of information and communication technologies and the internet (Akin, 2011). The internet is used to develop a political base that is difficult to be developed offline (KOCIS, 2011). Cyberactivism is seen as important towards progressive social change. It is important to study them as part of social movement organizations, because they also have a sentimental effect on politics, social transformation, social change and social movement theory (McCaughey and Ayers, 2003). Cyberactivism has great potential regarding support in individual and collective empowerment or participation.

According to Lemos, there are three characteristics of cyberactivism, namely the first is awareness and information, such as campaigns triggered by Amnesty International, Greenpeace, or the Human Rights Telematic Network. The second is organization and mobilization, this happens throughout the internet to support certain actions (invitations for concrete actions to be taken). And the third is an initiative known as hacktivism, which is a network action that involves many types of electronic actions, such as sending mass e-mails, petitions and blocking access via DoS (Denial of Service) (Schaun, et.al. 2013).
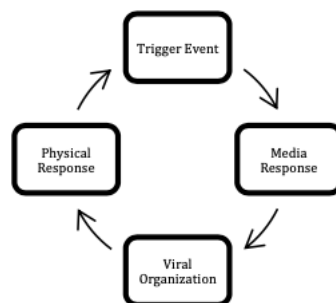

Figure 1. Model for Political Movements Using Social Media

The development of cyberactivism can occur because there are four underlying stages, namely: triggering event, traditional media response, viral organization, and physical response (Sandoval- Almazan and Gil- Garcia, 2014). Trigger events act as catalysts for new pathways of behaviour and attract the attention of traditional media. Without these triggers it would be difficult to start a protest against a social issue. Trigger factors create responses which called as the stages of media response. It is part of the communication model where messages are passed from the sender to the receiver, and then the receiver responds to the message. This media response encourages information aggregation for activists, information dissemination and encourages other parties to join social movements. After the information spreads and

gets a reaction from the masses, they will begin to form virtual organizations by developing a collective identity. Some of the characteristics of virtual organizations are free access, no moderation, no access rules, no leadership, horizontal organization, free flow of information, and online discussion. This viral organization influences two forms of mobilization: online mobilization (or cyberactivism) and offline mobilization (McCaughey and Ayers, 2003). The purpose of this viral organization is to place protests in the physical world, which shows the power of social protest. The use of street demonstrations and technology together can enhance the dissemination of information on the internet. This is the way to produce a physical response and organize resistance. Physical response is the last stage of cyberactivism. The physical response demonstrates the organization's power and encourages new activists to promote and replicate the movement.

Cyberactivism cannot be separated from social movements. In this study, the concept of social movement will be used to analyse movements carried out by groups of K-Pop fans, where this group of fans originally existed because of the same preference for K-Pop which then penetrated into social and political issues. The concept of cyberactivism is used to analyse the ways and stages of K-Popers in organizing movements for political protests in Thailand in 2020.

METHOD

This study used qualitative methods with a case study approach. Qualitative methods based on research procedures that produce descriptive data, in the form of written words of observed behaviour (Moleong, 2007). A case study is an in-depth study of an individual, a group, an organization, an activity program, and so on at a certain time. The goal is to obtain a complete and in-depth description of an entity (Rahardjo, 2010). From a case study of a political protest movement against the Thai government in 2020, the researcher examines social movement efforts by K-Pop fans. Researcher uses the concept of social movements and cyberactivism to analyse the data generated from the case study. The data sources in this study are derived from secondary data, namely related literature, books, journals and articles as well as national and international mass media, both online and in print.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

K-Pop Fans Activism on Social and Political Issues

Fans are the most visible part of the audience of pop culture texts and practices (Storey, 2007). Likewise with K-Pop as popular culture. K-Popers or fandom are a group of fans with high fanaticism. A fandom is characterized by the feeling of closeness and belonging because of mutual interests (Dewi, 2021). In recent years, the media's discussion of K-pop fans has shifted away from negative stereotypes.

Previously K-Popers had negative stigma, from having excessive fanaticism towards idols, being consumptive, obsessive, and not loving the country (Tartila, 2013). However, as if to refute this stereotype, K-Popers have never been separated from social activism, both offline and online. K-pop fans are now seen as the power to mobilize movements.

K-Popers, have participated in various forms of activism related to various social issues until now developing on political issues such as criticizing new laws, or protesting against the government. Fan activism is considered to be one of the new forms of political participation. "Fan-driven efforts to address civic or political issues through engaging and strategically implementing popular culture content" (Brough and Shresthova, 2012) is how fan activism is defined. It should come as no surprise that K-Popers have an impact on our current political discourse. They have been known to use their power for a variety of causes ranging from human rights campaigns to educational programs, frequently in the name of the idols they worship (Bruner, 2020). Because in the convergence era, "our political struggles often occur through language and contexts heavily shaped by commercial culture, making fan and consumer activism central to contemporary social movements" (Jenkins, 2011).

Several cases that show K-Popers' involvement in socio-political issues started with the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM). BLM movement played a significant role in bringing K-popers into the current political debate. When the wave of #BlackLivesMatter protests after the death of George Floyd broke out in the United States, the Dallas Police asked the public to upload videos of BLM protesters which they considered illegal protest activities through the iWatch Dallas application. The action of K-popers on social media began by attacking iWatch application that belonging to the Dallas Police Department in Texas. K-pop fans around the world responded by flooding the app with fan- recorded videos, known as fan cam, and memes of various K-pop artists, in an effort to prevent police from tracking protesters' actions. Efforts by K-pop fans have also included flooding campaign hashtags against the BLM movement, such as #WhiteOutTuesday and #AllLivesMatter. This was aimed at thwarting efforts to spread white supremacist ideology. K-pop fans used social media to urge K-pop entertainment companies to support racial justice. Not only that, on social media K-pop fans are also competing to donate to the Black Lives Matter movement of $ 1 million, such as the boy band BTS (Whiteboard Journal, 2020).

K-Popers were also involved in sabotaging Donald Trump's United States presidential election campaign in 2020. K-Popers invited people to order tickets for Trump's campaign but were not present at the event. The rally was then attended by just 6,200 people, causing the expectation of Trump to fall who thought his campaign tickets were booked with up to one million people. This has caused K-Pop fandom activism in the US political sphere to be discussed and reported throughout the world.

This movement was carried out as a form of protest against Trump who held a campaign on June 19 to coincide with Juneteenth, which is the anniversary of the end of slavery in the United States.

K-Popers started with a liking for K-Pop and developed into a social movement. This is in accordance with Olson's opinion that social movements can occur when someone with others has the same interests, so they will act collectively to achieve what they believe in. K-Popers have long demonstrated their ability to coordinate for a common goal and mobilize a large number of people. More than just collective action, the most common K-Popers activities involve organized fan-unification activities with their own goals. K-Popers who initially moved to support their idol artists from mass voting, flash mobs, fancam posts, fundraising and gifts for idols' birthdays have shifted towards voicing various social issues. This explains that K-Popers often show solidarity not only regarding to their idols, but also on issues surrounding democracy, freedom and humanity. This sense of solidarity is aimed to make changes.

The territory is not limited to certain country. By relying on digital media to campaign and carry out its movements, K-Popers action is not limited to certain areas and does not limit participants. In fact, the K-Popers movement widens the spread of issues and encourages more parties to get involved in the movement, which are not limited to certain K-Pop fans or fandoms. The movement carried out by K-Popers has fulfilled the characteristics of social movement according to Wilson (Sukmana, 2016), namely in the form of an organized collectively, with the aim of trying to make changes, a wide area of scope, methods using non-institutional channels, and its nature does not limit people. So that K-Popers, which was originally brought together because of interest, has turned into a social movement when dealing with various social issues, including socio-political issues. In line with the opinion of Macionis (1999) which states that a social movement is an organized activity aimed at encouraging or inhibiting a social change.

In the current era of globalization, where information and technology are increasing rapidly, young people tend to choose digital social movements because of the convenience they offer in reaching the masses and are not limited both geographically and administratively. K-Popers who are dominated by the millennial generation and from the Gen-Z generation fit this profile. K-Popers use social media to facilitate their activism goals. Social media is used as a platform for K-pop fans around the world to discuss and raise awareness about various social issues.

Social movements in the digital space bring various changes. There has been a change in the action that was previously carried out with field actions and now has changed to action on social media. The people who usually carry out field actions often find it difficult to gather and coordinate crowds. But through social media, information dissemination is easier to do and reach more people. In addition, there is

a physical change to digital, where previously had to write on paper during actions or express aspirations, but now it is enough to make a pamphlet design and then distribute it to all contacts, existing social media groups. This method is more effective and efficient to implement.

Social media is also a tool for K-Pop fans to spread information regarding popular culture in support of their favourite idols. The action then extends to the actions taken in raising contemporary global issues. Social media is often used to carry out political participation through online activism. So here K-Popers are said to carry out cyberactivism. This is in accordance with Langman (2003) who stated that cyberactivism is the widespread use of the internet to provide conflicting information and inspire social mobilization.

K-Pop Fans Cyberactivism in Supporting Thailand Anti-Government Protests

The Black Lives Matter movement and Trump's campaign boycott are not the only examples in which K-pop fans have been seen asserting their influence through political mobilization. The K- Popers movement on socio-political issues is spreading to various countries including Southeast Asia, as one of the fastest growing K-pop markets. One of them is in Thailand. Thailand is not only famous for its high number of K-Pop fans, but also several K-Pop idols are from this country. Based on data compiled by Twitter in the period January 1-November 15 2019, Thailand ranks first as the country with the highest K-Pop-related conversations on Twitter (CNN Indonesia, 2020).

In 2020 thousands of young people in Thailand come out to the streets to carry out protests against the government. They called for changes in a number of pro-democracy protests. This demonstration is the largest action that has taken place in the country in recent years. In 2020, there were over 779 pro-democracy protests as well as pro-government and pro-monarchy protests in 77 provinces. In particular, there were 261 protests organized in Bangkok (Mob Data Thailand, 2022). The growing pro-democracy movement is calling for the resignation of Prime Minister Prayuth Chan- ocha. Prayuth Chan-ocha is the military leader who led a coup in 2014 and was reappointed as prime minister in 2019 (BBC, 2020). The protesters' demand the amendment of the constitution, new elections, an end to harassment of human rights activists, critics of the state and restrictions on the powers of the king.

This protest began with the decision of the Constitutional Court of Thailand to dissolve the Future Forward Party which is a pro-democracy party on charges of political motives where this party was proven to have received illegal funds. This has created disappointment for the younger generation who want change after Thailand was previously under military rule. In recent months, their actions have expanded to demand limits on King Vajiralongkorn's powers, who spends the majority of his time in Germany. The protesters opposed the king's decision to transfer all ownership in

the Crown Property Bureau to his private ownership, which made him the richest man in Thailand. There are also questions about his decision to take personal command of all military units based in Bangkok where military power is concentrated in royal hands (BBC, 2020). This is unprecedented in Thailand's modern era.

After people created a petition calling for King Maha Vajiralongkorn to be declared persona non grata in Germany, the Thai government blocked access to the online petition site Change.org. Before the site was blocked in Thailand, the petition received nearly 130,000 signatures, with an online notification stating that the content had been suspended for violating Thailand's Computer- Related Crimes Act (BBC, 2020). Basically, online petitions are a form of political participation which acts as a bridge between the community and the government. On the other hand, this form of political participation can also be addressed to social interests. The influence of online petitions on a problem is a solution in the implementation of policy advocacy, arguments and public suggestions that will be directly conveyed to the intended target (Lindner, and Riehm, 2011).

The blocking of the online petition site Change.org is seen as an act of silencing public opinion which has increasingly sparked protests. Thousands of people then participated in the action on the streets. However, this action was later stopped by the Government of Thailand which issued an emergency decree on restrictions in the Covid-19 pandemic situation. Under Thailand's coronavirus state of emergency, the decree technically prohibits large gatherings, restricting groups to a maximum of four people. In addition, the decree prohibits the publication of news, other media, and electronic information containing messages that may cause fear or willfully distort information (CNN Indonesia, 2020). The decree stated "there is conduct that influences, and there is reason to believe that there is behaviour that violence affects the security of the state, safety in life, or the assets of the people and the state," (Nikkei Asia, 2020). Violating the ban can result in a two-year prison sentence.

The Thailand government has issued an emergency decree prohibiting such demonstrations in an attempt to suppress the protests. Nonetheless, the student-led democracy movement has persisted. Hundreds of people took to the streets of Bangkok, with some targeting the prime minister's office. The government reacted by sending in riot police. This resulted in a large number of arrests. The influence of K-Pop fans in the protests in Thailand began to be seen after a massive demonstration on October 16, 2020. At that time, police forces used water cannons to disperse the unarmed protesters. This action infuriated many people. Various protests against the Thai government, public anger over the actions of the police who used water cannons to disperse the protesters and the arrests of activists became triggering events. Triggering events act as catalysts for new behavioural pathways and attract the attention of traditional media (Sandoval-Almazan and Gil- Garcia, 2014). It will be difficult to initiate a protest against a social issue without this trigger. Trigger factors

create responses which called as the stages of media response. It is part of the communication model where messages are passed from the sender to the receiver, and then the receiver responds to the message.

Reports in both national and international media including social media are increasingly highlighting the conditions in Thailand. The response shown by K-Popers as part of cyber activism is to echo the protests in Thailand through the viral hashtag domination on Twitter. K-Popers voiced this issue globally through #WhatIsHappeningInThailand. The viral hashtag as part of this media response is a means of aggregating information for activists, spreading information widely, and encouraging K-Pop fans and other parties to join the protest movement against the Thai government. The next stage in cyberactivism is the viral organization. After the information regarding to the conditions in Thailand spread and received mass reactions, K-Popers began to form virtual organizations by developing their collective identity as K-Pop fans. K-Popers also used K-Pop song lyrics and #Dispatch viral memes to express disillusionment with the government, and Thai youth used K-pop dance and social media to mobilize and disseminate information on pro-democracy demonstrations (Tanakasempipat, 2020) (Hyun-su, 2020). On social media, the accounts of K-pop fans that used to focus on news about their favourite artists have turned to political issue. They promoted protest-related hashtags and undermined pro-monarchy hashtags with sarcastic messages and K-pop slang (Tanakasempipat, 2020).

K-Popers are used to make trending topics on Twitter. The hashtags or topics they tweet about are almost always trending daily on Twitter. They have an agenda to increase the volume of conversation about their idols as an effort to support idols' career in the K-Pop industry. This strategy is also carried out to respond other issues. K-Popers are able to mobilize large numbers of people through small groups in each fan base. The issues that were brought up then spread to other fan bases. K-Popers ask that each fan tweet does not use more than two hashtags. That's an effective and fast way to popularize an issue. Every K-Poper also adds new sentences in retweet so that the substance of the issue is continuously updated. Not only that, K-Popers also continue to tweet with constant pauses so that the hashtag that is carried remains a popular topic for a long time (Putri, 2020). By spreading issues through hashtags that will be retweeted by other fandoms, it will become a trending topic.

Further, fandom of Girls Generation started a poll on Twitter with over 17,500 followers. The poll was aimed to see if they could help fund the protests. K-Pop fans united in raising money for a real demonstration in Thailand. The results were very positive. In just nine hours, this fandom, who called SONE, raised over 780,000 baht (US$34,240), along with other Thai K-pop fandoms who have collectively raised over 4 million baht (128,000 US dollars). Super Junior E.L.F.'s fandom managed to raise over 700,000 baht ($22,500) in 22 hours (Tanakasempipat, 2020).

These funds were used to purchase protective equipment such as helmets and goggles, arrange delivery to protest sites, and record everything for transparency. Activist Intira "Sai" Charoenpura posted on Twitter that donations came from fans of the groups BTS, Exo, Got7, Girls Generation and others (Sani, 2020). The majority of donations were directed to Thai Lawyers for Human Rights, a non-profit organization that has provided pro bono legal assistance to over 90 protesters arrested since mid-October. Thai Lawyers for Human Rights said that donations were soaring.

K-Popers are able to mobilize large numbers of people through small groups in each fan base. K-Popers are used to make trending topics on Twitter and doing online fundraising campaigns. They frequently use fundraising campaigns to purchase billboard advertisements in public places to commemorate their idols' birthdays or the release of new albums. This corresponds to virtual organization characteristics such as open access, no moderation, no access rules, no leadership, horizontal organization, free flow of information, and online discussion.

The purpose of this viral organization is to place protests in the physical world, which shows the power of social protest. K-Popers prove that they care about the situation in Thailand by participating in protests by taking to the streets. They joined pro-democracy rallies and used pop culture references to criticize the country's military-aligned Government. The presence of K-Popers was evident at protests, when activists waved LED signs and light sticks, as they do at K-pop concerts, and held gold-framed pictures of music idols that parody portraits of Thai royalty (Tanakasempipat, 2020). Apart from that, they also sang K-Pop songs when doing demonstration. Many K-Pop song lyrics have deep messages for the fans. Like the song Into the New World by SNSD. In the song there are lyrics "Walking the many and unknowable paths, I follow a dim light, It's something we'll do together to the end, Into the new world". Some protesters also turned Girls' Generation's song Into The New World as the soundtrack for the action to express hope for a brighter future.

The physical response in which K-Popers join the pro-democracy demonstrations and use Pop culture to voice their criticism is the last stage of cyberactivism. It's a way of producing a physical response and organizing resistance. The physical response shows the power of K-Popers to the community and encourages other parties and the general public to promote and duplicate the movement. The use of street demonstrations and technology together can enhance the dissemination of information on the internet.

The involvement of K-Popers in supporting protests in Thailand has fulfilled three characteristics of cyberactivism according to Lemos (Schaun,et.al., 2013) namely the first is awareness and information, where there is awareness from K-Popers of the political problems that are currently happening in Thailand. The second is organization and mobilization, which is demonstrated by mobilizing movements via Twitter through #WhatIsHappeningInThailand as the viral hashtag domination on

Twitter to voice problems in Thailand globally. In addition, K-Popers also conducted a poll on Twitter to see if they could help fund the protests. The third characteristic is that initiatives involve many types of electronic actions. This is demonstrated by promoting #Dispatch as a form of protest and undermining pro-monarchy hashtags with sarcastic messages and K-pop slang as well as using K-pop dance and social media to mobilize and disseminate information on pro- democracy demonstrations. In addition, the initiative is also shown through fundraising.
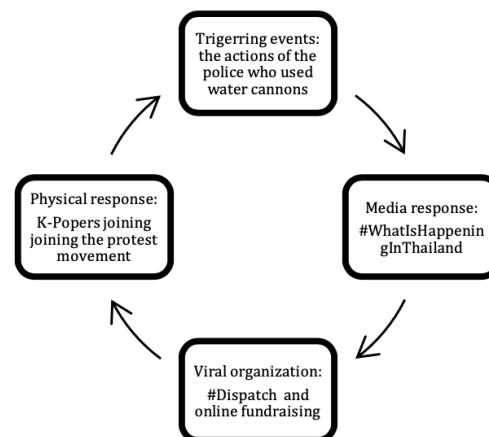

Figure 2. K-Pop Fans cyberactivism in Thailand's 2020 Protests

According to the theory of cyberactivism stages according to Sandoval-Almazan and Gil- Garcia (2014), the development of cyberactivism by K-Popers who make movements in political protests in Thailand in 2020 can occur because of triggering events in the early stages. Those were various protests against the Thai government, the blocking of the online petition site Change.org, public anger over the actions of the police who used water cannons to disperse the protesters and the arrests of activists. In the second stage, the media response shown by K-Popers is echoing the protests in Thailand through the viral hashtag domination #WhatIsHappeningInThailand on Twitter. The third stage is viral organization, where K-Popers organize other K-Pop fans to use K-Pop song lyrics and memes by making #Dispatch viral to express disappointment with the government, disseminate information on pro-democracy demonstrations and conduct online fundraising which intended to fund protests. The final stage is the physical response, namely K-Popers joining the protest movement against the Thai government and encouraging other parties to duplicate the movement.

K-Popers are emerging as a powerful political force in Thailand 2020 protests. Through the power of social media, K-Popers voice their forms of protest including mobilizing fundraising for the movement. Their support for the protest movement reflects a generation dissatisfied with the government using state power to silence dissent. Social media has the power to change the world because it can spread understanding about issues that occur in a country. The dominance of the younger

generation and understanding of social media make K-Popers have their own influence.

CONCLUSION

This paper concludes two main findings. The first finding is that K-Pop fans movement in supporting Thailand anti-government protests has fulfilled three characteristics of cyberactivism. The first is awareness and information, where there is awareness from K-Popers of the political problems that are currently happening in Thailand. The second is organization and mobilization, which is demonstrated by making viral hashtag domination on twitter called #WhatIsHappeningInThailand as the viral hashtag domination on Twitter and also conducted a poll on Twitter to see if they could help fund the protests. The third characteristic is that initiatives involve many types of electronic actions by promoting #Dispatch on Twitter as a and doing online fundraising.

The second finding is K-Pop fans cyberactivism in supporting Thailand's anti-government protests were carried out through four stages namely trigger event, media response, viral organization, and physical response. Various protests against the Thai government, the blocking of the online petition site Change.org, public anger over the actions of the police who used water cannons to disperse the protesters and the arrests of activists are the trigger event as the first stage. Media response as the second stage shown by the viral hashtag domination #WhatIsHappeningInThailand on Twitter made by K-Pop fans to spread this issue globally. The third stage is viral organization, where K-Pop fans organize other fandom to use K-Pop song lyrics and memes by making #Dispatch viral to express disappointment with the government, disseminate information on pro-democracy demonstrations and conduct online fundraising which intended to fund protests. The final stage is the physical response, namely K-Popers joining the protest movement against the Thailand government, use Pop culture to voice their criticism and also encouraging other parties to duplicate the movement.

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