

Research on Gender and Health Inequality in Korean Society(Ⅲ): Focusing on Obsession with Appearance and Cosmetic Surgery

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in Korean Society (III):
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and Cosmetic Surgery**

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I . Research background and objectives

In Korean society, the number of individuals investing unlimited amounts of time and money into creating increasingly youthful and more beautiful bodies is rising. We are living in an era in which management of the body, encompassing external appearance, has become a normal part of daily life to this extent. Especially for females, the body is considered to be a measure of (feminine) self-management. As a result, females experience judgement and discrimination about their bodies simultaneously at the sites of work and life. In other words, women are strongly demanded to take care of their bodies by society.

In Korean society, obsession about the female appearance (body) and its distortion is intensifying due to judgment and discrimination about the female appearance, as well as the revitalization of the cosmetic surgery industry. In severe cases, this leads to eating disorders such as a nervous

lack of appetite or anorexia and bulimia. As a result, this causes not only physical health problems such as malnutrition, hair loss, and menstrual irregularity, but can also become a cause of mental health problems such as severe levels of depression, suicidal impulses, and suicide attempts. Females who experience obsession and distortion over appearance tend to rely on cosmetic surgery to have the most ideal body that society wants in a very short period of time. During this process, medical accidents and medical disputes related to cosmetic surgery have also been increasing. Nevertheless, there is a lack of discussion on the influence that the body of our society, especially the social body granted to females, has on women's lives, as well as how to provide social policy to improve this.

In this study, we analyze correlations between Korean society's gendered perceptions of the body and the resulting obsession with appearance, cosmetic surgery and the capitalized body, and mental health after medical accidents, and propose to establish policy measures to guarantee women's rights as owners in control of their own bodies, and women's rights to the health of their bodies.

II. Current status of legal systems related to appearance and cosmetic surgery: domestic and international cases

1. Current status in South Korea

1) Hiring regulations

"The Act on Equal Employment of Men and Women," "The Framework Act on Employment Policy," and "The National Human Rights

Commission Act," etc. explicitly prohibit discrimination due to physical conditions (such as appearance, height, weight, etc.), along with gender, age, religion, medical history, etc. in recruiting and hiring workers. Despite these legal provisions, the number of job openings advertised that have discriminatory requirements for appearance/body is rising, and even if these conditions are not listed in the notice for employment, specific requirements for appearance/body are required in the actual hiring process.

2) Regulations in broadcasting production

The "Regulations on Broadcasting Review" have a separate clause on gender equality and under these provisions, state that stereotypical gender roles are aggravated by content that uniformly prescribes the appearance, personality, role, etc., of a particular gender, and therefore, the regulations state that this is not allowed. Although many gender discrimination issues in programs have been pointed out, there has been criticism that the number of sanctions that have been reviewed is very low, and that the review is just a formality. The "Guide to Gender Equality for Broadcasting Production" released by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family in early 2019 was also criticized over censorship and regulation of broadcasting production.

3) Regulations on cosmetic surgery safety

A series of medical accidents caused by cosmetic surgery highlighted the need for safety management measures to protect patients' rights, so amendments to the Medical Law were submitted to ensure the safety of patients, with measures such as the installation of CCTVs in operating

rooms, the obligation to keep emergency medical equipment inside cosmetic surgery clinics, and the prohibition of plastic surgery advertisements in mass media such as newspapers, billboards, and the Internet. However, the majority of these bills' terms expired without being approved, and therefore they were automatically scrapped [1]. Because plastic surgery is a medical service that is not covered by insurance, and therefore the management system for medical practice is not applicable, it is difficult to even grasp the actual current status of medical accidents. As excessive plastic surgery advertisements can also be a cause of safety problems, they are being regulated by the "Medical Service Act" and the "Sign Advertisement Act," but their effectiveness is a problem due to the fact that advertisements through SNS, smartphone apps, and social communities, are excluded from domestic review regulations, and there is no management for these advertisements.

2. Current status of cases in major countries

1) Hiring regulations

In some countries, discrimination on the grounds of appearance/physical condition in hiring is comprehensively regulated as a part of sexual discrimination, and guidelines are also in place to prevent discrimination in hiring [2]. For example, in order to avoid both preferential and exclusionary treatment of a specific person or group of people in applications for employment, a standard application is recommended to ensure that certain factors (such as gender, age, photo, academic background, place of residence, etc.) are not marked. The relevant Japanese laws that corresponds to the Korean "Gender Equal Employment Act" prohibits gender discrimination in concrete situations, such as

excluding either gender in recruitment or hiring, treating men and women differently, applying different standards to men and women in hiring, or giving either gender priority. Here, elements directly and indirectly associated with appearance/physical condition are also included, such as being single/married or pregnant, in the case of women [3].

2) Regulation of broadcasting production

In the United Kingdom, the BBC's production guidelines and advertising review bodies such as the Advertising Standards Commission strictly regulate broadcasting production and advertising that instill stereotypical gender roles or show gender-discriminatory situations and related content. Here, portraying very thin women as the ideal woman is banned [4]. Several European countries, including France [5] and Australia [6], are also recommending gender equality as foundational in the production of broadcast programs and advertising, and are preparing related laws and guidelines to install and operate committees that will conduct reviews related to this. Although there are no particular regulations about appearance/body, there are regulations about specific discrimination and hatred based on skin color, gender, age and sexual aspects, all of which can be seen as related to appearance/body.

3) Safety regulation of cosmetic surgery

Austria enacted its Cosmetic Surgery Act in 2013, and included in this was the required qualifications of doctors, the duty of doctors to explain to patients, the form and scope of explanation, the age limit to give permission for invasive procedures, a mandatory cooling-off period between the doctor's explanation and patient's consent, the restriction of

advertising to protect patients, and the prohibition on remuneration for introducing new patients [7]. France also enacted a law related to cosmetic surgery in 2003, and this included the qualifications of medical personnel who can perform cosmetic surgery/procedures, standards for facilities, prior explanation from medical personnel and patient consent, a cooling-off period, and in the case of procedures/surgeries requiring anesthesia, consultation with a relevant expert and the guarantee of necessary measures, as well as (written) documentation of all of the cosmetic surgery [8]. Like Austria and France, Australia also put regulations in place to ensure the safety of cosmetic surgery patients, including statistics to identify infectious diseases following cosmetic surgery and regulations on standardized procedures/surgeries [8].

4) Regulation of body image

In 2013, Israel enacted the Law for Restricting Weight in the Modeling Industry, also known as the Photoshop Law. In order to minimize the negative impact on the public of overly thin models on television and in media advertising, each time a professional model is in a fashion show, she is required to submit her body mass index records, and when photos of models are made public by the media, etc., it has to be specified whether or not the photo was Photoshopped (this photo has been corrected or not, etc.), so the public can recognize the difference between real and modified images. However, in the case that they break the law, the law is not enforced, for example, with fines or imprisonment. France also enacted its Photoshop Act in 2015, but it differs from Israel in that it is under criminal law, so violations can result in fines and prison sentences [9]. In the United Kingdom, heavily edited Photoshop

images are prohibited on television and online advertising, but its effectiveness is still low because it is not legally enforced [10].

III. Current status of the cosmetic surgery industry in Korean society and medical disputes

1. Current status of the cosmetic surgery industry

1) Growth of specialists in plastic surgery and dermatology

During the period of 2006-2017, a steady increase in the number of specialists was visible, and the number of plastic surgeons specializing in cosmetic surgery and dermatology has increased. In 2017, out of the whole, 2.43% were specialized in plastic surgery, and 2.53% were specialized in dermatology. Among plastic surgeons, Seoul has the largest portion with 48.59%, while Gyeonggi Province has 12.08%; these regions tend to be skewed. About 38.29% of dermatologists are in Seoul, followed by Gyeonggi Province with 20.41%, accounting for about 60% of the country [11].

In terms of city/county/district, both plastic surgeons and dermatologists represent the highest percentage in Seoul's administrative district of Gangnam, with 32.6% of the country's plastic surgeons and 10.2% of the dermatologists. In the case of plastic surgery clinics, the Gangnam district has more than five times the number of the Seocho district, which has the second highest rate at 6.1%. There are 67.8% of plastic surgeons and 81.7% of dermatologists working at the clinic level, and in Seoul, out of 25 specialized medical departments at the clinic level, plastic surgeons and dermatologists account for 11.6% of them [12].

2) Current status of cosmetic surgery procedures internationally

According to statistics from the International Society of Athletic Plastic Surgery (ISPAS), as of 2014, Korea had 980,313 cases of surgical and non-surgical procedures, with only the United States, Brazil, and Japan having more. However, if we look at the number of procedures per capita, the number of surgical and non-surgical measures in Korea is very high, with 13 surgical or nonsurgical procedures for every 1,000 persons [13].

If we look at the current status of foreigners receiving plastic surgery and dermatology treatment in Korea, the number of foreign patients has been increasing every year since 2009, with plastic surgery clinics attracting 66,969 cases in 2018, a 23.5-fold increase from 2009, while there were 63,671 dermatology cases, a 10.6-fold increase from 2009. Of all the foreign patients lured to Korea for treatment, plastic surgery and dermatology accounted for 13.7% of the total cases in 2009, but the proportion is increasing significantly, from 16.0% in 2012, to 19.7% in 2015, and 28.1% in 2018 [14].

2. Current status of medical disputes in cosmetic plastic surgery

1) Current status of medical dispute consultation in plastic surgery

Plastic surgery has the fourth-highest number of cases of all medical dispute consultation sessions with 6.6%, while the top three are orthopedics (20.3%), internal medicine (12.8%), and dentistry (11.8%). The actual number of consultations has generally increased since 2012, when the Korea Medical Dispute Arbitration Agency was established. Women accounted for over three-quarters of conflict-related consultations, with the largest number of consultations involving those in their 30s, and the largest gender gap was seen between women and men in their 20s [15].

2) Application for mediation of plastic surgery medical dispute

The number of applications for dispute settlements with plastic surgery clinics has steadily increased since 2012, with 160 cases in 2018, accounting for 5.5% of the total. About three-quarters or more of plastic surgery dispute settlement applications are initiated by women, especially those in their 30s [16].

3) Applications for mediation of plastic surgery disputes by long-term care hospitals and medical activity

Of all medical disputes in hospitals and clinics, most are in large institutions such as higher-level hospitals and general hospitals (45.9%), but 81.3% of plastic surgery medical disputes occur in clinics. If we look at all medical disputes caused by long-term care hospitals, the highest number of disputes are from surgery with 39.0%. Plastic surgery-related medical disputes are no different, with surgery accounting for the majority, at 78.8% [16].

IV. Gendered standards and obsession about appearance, and awareness and experiences related to cosmetic plastic surgery¹⁾

1. Internalization of stereotypes about appearance, what others think, and attention to weight

1) In this study, a survey was conducted of the general public (15-64 years old) to identify perceptions and experiences regarding appearance and cosmetic surgery. The people in this population were registered in Korea's national resident registration as of July 2019, and the target number of samples was 2,500. We took samples proportional to the group's population based on gender, age, and region. The survey was conducted online using the Internet from August 9-23, 2019, and 2,585 people participated in the survey.

Through related questions, we asked how much stereotypes about appearance are internalized. More than 80% of survey participants said, "A suit should be worn by a person with a good-looking body shape," and more than 60% responded, "When I see a good-looking person on TV or in the movies, I want to have that kind of appearance." We can know through this that many people have internalized stereotypes about the ideal appearance and body type.

We examined how much people cared about their appearance in relation to what others think, and 60-70% of survey participants replied that they cared about how they would look to others "before going out," "in class or meeting," or "when a group meets." Through this perspective, we can know that a considerable number of people are conscious about their appearance and body shape when meeting others in their daily lives and working together.

We examined how much they cared about their weight (body type), and the result was that more than half of the survey participants said, "I'm careful about my weight for fear of gaining weight," more than 30% said, "I go on a diet right away if I gain even a little weight," and "I weigh myself every day," while about 20% responded, "I refrain from eating fattening food or think about calories first, and then eat."

The above results confirmed that more body type/weight distortion is visible in women than men, younger rather than middle-aged people, and overweight/obese people than those who are of normal weight. Women's responses were 10% higher than men. In particular, the positive response rate was the highest among female youth. In other words, stereotypes about appearance in this population were the most severe, they were more concerned about what other people think about their appearance/body type, and there were many instances where they were

concerned with weight management. This indirectly implies that judgment and demands about appearance/body type are higher in this population than in any group. In the case of those who were subjectively perceived to be thin or actually had a low body mass index (BMI), as well as those whose body type (weight) was excessively distorted, it was found that the more dissatisfied they were with their overall appearance, the stronger they had internalized stereotypes about appearance, they cared more about what others thought about their appearance, and were also more concerned about their weight.

2. Social conventions about appearance

When asked how men and women are perceived at the individual and social levels regarding their respective appearance, the result was that both men and women generally agreed that women's appearance and management of their appearance are important for their social success; that women should be thin and fat women are not charming; that women's appearance is more important than ability; and in addition, women's appearance is important for those in the field of entertainment and in marriage, as well as in employment and interpersonal relationships. In particular, the rate that women agreed to these statements regarding women's appearance and appearance management was higher than men.

The rate of at which people agreed to the above statements on the individual level was lower than they agreed to the statements on the level of society. In other words, the majority agreed that women's appearance and management of their appearance play a very important role in social success and formation of their social relationships in Korean society. This means that women's appearance and appearance management are very

important social factors for women. But regarding men's appearance and management of their appearance, the percentage of participants who agreed that it is important for social success and social relationship formation was higher relative to those who agreed about its importance at the individual level. However, it was relatively low compared to the rate that participants agreed to the statements about women's appearance and management of their appearance. In addition, female respondents were relatively more likely than male respondents to agree with statements on men's appearance and management of their appearance. This means that men are also pressured to look masculine and manage their appearance, and there is a body (image) required by men in society. However, the opinion of women was that these standards may or may not apply to men, so this shows that the social norms about the body demanded by society are stricter toward women than men. Through this, we can confirm that there is a clear difference between conventional wisdom and norms about the bodies of women and men in Korean society.

3. Awareness of the standards of appearance in Korean society and anxiety about appearance

When asked if there are particular standards for appearance in Korean society, many of the respondents said that there are certain standards for appearance and an ideal standard for appearance that society demands. Particularly in the case of those who perceive that they cannot reach the standard, there were many responses that said it's hard to manage their appearance to meet this standard, and many said that they receive disadvantages because they do not meet the standard. More women than men gave this kind of response, and among women, those who gave this

response the most were youth. In fact, the group that most agreed with the statement "The desirable (ideal) appearance demanded by our society is more forced on women" was female youth, who agreed at the rate of 91.5%. In addition, more than 70% of male respondents agreed that our society's standards for appearance tend to be more enforced on women than men. The majority of women also agreed that this standard for appearance applies even during pregnancy, agreeing with the statements, "Even during pregnancy, women have to manage their weight and appearance (body type)" and "Women must manage their weight and appearance (body type) to return to their pre-pregnancy appearance (body type)." Not only young women, but also middle-aged women agreed with these statements, with a similar rate of agreement. In addition, men also had a high rate of agreement on the necessity of women managing their appearance during pregnancy.

When asked if they were worried and anxious about the standards for appearance in our society, there was a high rate of agreement from everyone, both men and women, young and old, with these statements: "I'm worried my appearance will fall short of the standard of appearance," "I'm worried that others will dislike my appearance," and "I'm worried that I'll miss a good opportunity due to my appearance." There was one population that agreed more than other groups, female youth, whose agreement with these statements was higher than that of any other population. In the case when BMI, which shows actual obesity levels, shows underweight or overweight/obese rather than normal, and in cases where people subjectively perceived themselves as not normal, but too thin or fat, the higher their dissatisfaction with their overall appearance, the significantly higher was their appearance anxiety. In particular, this kind of tendency was clearly identified among women and

young people. On the other hand, we examined the degree of anxiety about one's appearance that changes with "aging," and found this to be relatively higher among middle-aged people than among young people. Especially within the middle-aged, women's anxiety was relatively high compared to men's, which shows that appearance anxiety caused by "aging" is also more serious in women. This did not mean that the anxiety among young women was low, but rather that "aging" itself deviates from the standards of appearance demanded by society, so we can know that managing the "aged" appearance becomes an increasingly demanding factor for women as they go through life.

4. Awareness of Korean society's gender-based looks that highlight femininity and masculinity

We asked questions to examine how the appearances of both feminine women and masculine men are defined in Korean society. There was a tendency among both men and women to believe that women with broad shoulders or muscles, a square face, a short neck and no waistline, and rough skin are not feminine. By gender, the number of women who believed this was relatively high, and men also had a high awareness about what they considered to be a feminine appearance. Regarding a masculine appearance, both men and women had a strong tendency to believe that men are not masculine if they have narrow shoulders or no muscles, a thin body type, or are short. In particular, this belief was high among male youth, and the rate of this kind of belief was also high among women. Based on the above results, we could confirm that in Korean society, appearance is regulated by gender into feminine and masculine looks.

5. Prejudice against obese females and males

We examined how much social prejudice there is against obese people, and if there is any difference according to gender. The rate of people who believed that obese women, as compared to men, are "not hard-working" and are "lazy" was high and statistically meaningful. In particular, the prejudice against obese women was higher compared to men, and higher for middle-aged people than young people. However, no significant differences were confirmed for obese men among respondents even considering gender/age. When we see through this perspective, we can know that there is different prejudice depending on gender even against obese people, and that men's bias against obese women is at a serious level.

6. Experiences with family and friends/colleagues pointing out the importance of appearance and the necessity of taking care of it

When asked how much family, friends, and colleagues pointed out that appearance is important and therefore should be taken care of, overall, the people who experienced that the most were male youth. However, when the question was limited to family, young men and also young women had a high rate of experience with that. In particular, this pointing out tended to differ depending on the actual BMI and the subjectively perceived body type. For example, the group of women who had the very fewest experiences of having the importance of appearance and taking care of it pointed out by parents, friends, and colleagues were those with low weight and thin body types. On the other hand, those with normal weight/normal body types, and even more so for those with

overweight/obesity and fat body type, had significantly more of these experiences of being pointed out. The demand from society on women to have a low-weight or thin-body type is reflected in the fact that women are demanded to look like this by even their family members, friends, and colleagues. However, men with normal weight/normal body types had the fewest experiences of the importance of appearance being pointed out, but those who were underweight or had thin body types had a relatively high number of experiences. In other words, this result reflects a tendency for men who are underweight or who have thin body types to be perceived socially as inconsistent with a masculine image.

7. Experiences with being harmed or causing harm to another person due to appearance being demeaned or hated

We asked about people's experience of being hurt because others demeaned or hated their appearance, or on the other hand, if they had hurt another person by demeaning or hating them because of their appearance. The result was that of all survey participants, 10-30% had heard demeaning or hateful remarks about their appearance (6 items: weight, skin color, breast size, make-up, waxing, and height) from family or friends, or acquaintances such as colleagues. In particular, women had significantly more of these kinds of damaging experiences than men. On the other hand, about 5-20% of participants had made remarks demeaning or hating another person's appearance, and most of the people who made such remarks were men.

8. Impact of exposure to cosmetic plastic surgery ads and impact of pathways of exposure on thoughts about and experiences of cosmetic plastic surgery

When asked how much they usually encounter cosmetic plastic surgery ads, 33.3% of the total responded "somewhat often," and 8.8% said "very often." If we look at gender, 52.7% of women, or a little more than half, said they somewhat often or often encounter such ads, far higher than the 32.0% rate of men who responded likewise. Among women, female youth were the highest at 62.4%, with 19.8% of female youth responding that they "very frequently encounter" such ads. This is more than 3 times the response rate of middle-aged women, male youth, and middle-aged men, who by comparison had a response rate of less than 6%.

When asked about how they encountered cosmetic surgery ads, the route for most respondents at 36.1% was "Internet homepage," "blog," and "internet café." This was followed by 26.0% for "bus" or "subway," with 24%, "SNS," "mobile apps," and "mobile phone text messages," with 24%, and "cosmetic plastic surgery hospitals," "billboards" and "digital billboards" comprising 12.6%. As such, we can know that in the current era, people are coming into contact with cosmetic plastic surgery ads mainly online, through relevant homepage sites and diverse social communities. In particular, young women come into contact with cosmetic surgery advertisements mostly through the social communities at 34.2%, while in the case of both middle-aged men and women, more than 40% responded that they came into contact with these ads through Internet homepages.

When asked if they thought about having cosmetic surgery or actually had plastic surgery as a result of coming into contact with a plastic surgery advertisement, 6.4% of respondents (1,996 people) responded that they had plastic surgery after seeing the advertisement, and 39.2% said they had thoughts of wanting to have cosmetic plastic surgery. If

we look at this, we can know that nearly 45% were directly or indirectly influenced by cosmetic advertisements. In particular, young women experienced the most cosmetic surgery at 10.2%, middle-aged women were slightly lower with 9.1%, young men were at 4.9%, and middle-aged men stood at 1.3%. Of the respondents who said they did not have cosmetic plastic surgery yet, but want to do it, there were significantly more women at 48.8%, as compared to 28.6% for men. In the case of young women, at 57.4%, or a majority of them, had actually been influenced by advertisements for cosmetic surgery if we count all of those who had experiences with cosmetic plastic surgery and those who want to have it.

9. Experience with cosmetic plastic surgery and relevant influencing factors

When asked if they have ever had cosmetic plastic surgery, 46.4% of young women responded that they have. Although lower than this, 34.1% of middle-aged women said they experienced it. Men have a relatively lower rate of experience than women, but 18.9% of men and 14.5% of middle-aged men have experienced it. The parts of the body where they had cosmetic plastic surgery were very diverse, including eyes, nose, forehead, chin, facial contouring, chest, waist, and buttocks. Women had significantly more experience than men with surgery on each of these types of body parts, and the number of body parts they had operated on was also higher compared to men.

When asked about the cost of cosmetic surgery and how economically burdensome it was, most respondents, accounting for 53.0%, said it was less than 1 million KRW (\$840 USD). This was followed by 26.5% for 1-3 million KRW, 10.7% for 3-5 million KRW, 6.4% for 5-10 million

KRW, and 3.6% for more than 10 million KRW. Regarding the amount spent on cosmetic surgery, 19.4% said it was "very burdensome," while 61.9% said it was "a little burdensome." This response shows the big gap between social classes, as 34.6% of lower-class respondents said it was "very burdensome," almost twice the rate of 16.7% for middle- and upper-classes.

Regarding the factors influencing cosmetic plastic surgery, we could see that in particular, the higher the person's actual body mass index (BMI, degree of obesity), the more they felt that their body type is large and that they had gotten fat, the more they distorted their body type/weight, the more dissatisfied they were with their overall appearance, and the higher their rate of experience with cosmetic surgery. In addition, the more frequently family members, friends, or colleagues pointed out the importance of appearance and the need to take care of it, the more significantly high was their rate of experience with cosmetic surgery, compared to cases where people tried to manage their appearance and weight through diets such as one-food diets, and diuretics/diarrheals, etc. In addition, the stronger people's internalization of stereotypes about appearance and looks based on gender, the more people cared about what others think about their appearance, the more concern people had about weight (management), the more prejudiced people were against obese people, and the higher their anxiety about appearance because of the standard for appearance in Korean society, the more significantly high was their rate of experience with cosmetic surgery.

10. Information acquired, and consent given prior to cosmetic surgery

When asked whether they had properly received necessary information

in the course of getting cosmetic surgery after deciding to have it, whether there was any information omitted, and who provided the information, 65.4% of the respondents who had surgery said they received information directly from the attending physician regarding 7 items of information that are required for deciding to have surgery (cost of procedure/surgery, provider, professional qualifications, method, side effects, pain, measures to treat side effects). Other than that, information on a remaining 6 items was provided by the attending physician 40-50% of the time. In other words, more than half did not receive the necessary information from the attending physician, or even anyone at all. In the case of non-surgical procedures, the rate of at which people received information from the attending physician was lower. Particularly, information about the doctor's professional qualifications, side effects, and follow-up care are very important to the patient's safety and health, but a high percentage of respondents, at 20-30%, said they did not receive relevant information from anyone.

When asked whether during the course of having cosmetic plastic surgery, there was a time their consent was not received, or they had received medical treatment that they did not request, 30.8% who had non-surgical procedures and 41.5% of those who did have surgical procedures agreed with the statement, "There was no process of receiving information on risks and then signing a consent form before the surgery/procedure." 30.1% of those who had non-surgical procedures and 31.4% of those who did have surgery agreed with the statement, "Medical staff advised me to have cosmetic surgery on other parts of my body in the process of consultation about surgery/procedure." 24.4% of those who had non-surgical procedures and 15.1% of those who had surgery reported that "In the process of having a consultation for

procedures/surgery, medical staff advised them to have surgery utilizing a more expensive method 'for the reason of safety.'" Finally, 7.5% of those who had non-surgical procedures and 6.9% of those who did have surgery agreed with the statement, "After the procedure/surgery, I had more surgery on a different body part."

11. Experience with adverse side effects after cosmetic plastic surgery and connection with the person who provided information before the procedure

When asked if they had experienced any side effects after cosmetic plastic surgery, 9.1% of those who had surgery said they did. The experience of side effects was significantly different between the groups who were informed in advance by the surgeon and those who were not. In other words, in cases where patients received information from a nurse or counselor, or if no one provided them information, there was a slight difference between groups. However, there was a significant difference in the experience of cosmetic surgery side effects when these groups were compared to the group that received information from the attending physician before the procedure. In particular, this group that received information directly from the attending physician regarding their qualifications and experience, as well as information about adverse side effects and measures related to side effects, experienced significantly lower rates of adverse side effects when compared with groups that received information from nurses, counselors, or those who did not receive any information. This shows that who gives the information before surgery, as well as whether or not relevant information was given regarding the actual side effects, is highly related to the safety of the procedure/surgery and side effects on the patient after the procedure/surgery.

12. Mental health

If we look at mental health risk factors such as depression and suicidal thoughts, we see that the group with low BMI and high BMI/obesity, and those who are subjectively perceived to be thin or fat and those who are dissatisfied with their overall appearance (body type) have more than a moderate rate of depressive symptoms and suicidal thoughts, and their experiences with this are significantly higher than other reference groups (for instance, the group of people with normal body weight and regular body type who are satisfied with their appearance). In addition, both depressive symptoms of moderate severity and above, as well as suicidal thoughts, were significantly higher in groups that had done dangerous things to manage their appearance (body type), those who had cosmetic plastic surgery, and those who experienced side effects following cosmetic plastic surgery, as compared with other groups. Statistically, there was a significantly high rate of experience with suicidal thoughts and a more than moderate risk of depressive symptoms that rose according to the strength of their internalization of stereotypes about appearance, the strength of their tendency to care about what others think about their appearance, their interest in their weight, the strength of their belief in socially conventional wisdom about women/men's appearance and the strength of their belief in a gender-based body, their awareness that there is a standard for appearance in Korean society, the amount of anxiety they have about their appearance because of this standard, how much parents, friends, and colleagues, and others, and others point out their appearance, and how much they have been exposed to the danger of eating disorders.

In addition, the latter counterpart of each of the following three pairs

had significantly higher rates of depression and suicidal thoughts: Those who had no surgery vs. those who had surgery; surgery once/a little vs. many surgeries; no side effects vs. people who had side effects.

13. Demand for policies related to cosmetic plastic surgery

When asked about the policy demand related to banning exaggerated and false advertising about cosmetic plastic surgery, most respondents, 53.7%, said, "Advertising that encourages cosmetic plastic surgery should be banned altogether." There was a high rate of agreement with the following statements: "Cosmetic surgery advertisements should be banned on public transportation, such as subways and buses (52.5%)", "Cosmetic surgery advertisements should be banned on the Internet and mobile devices such as smartphone apps (54.2%)", "Cosmetic surgery advertisements should be banned on SNS and blogs (50.5%)", "Operating YouTube channels introducing individual cosmetic surgery cases should be banned (49.1%)", and "Billboard ads for cosmetic surgery hospitals should be banned (44.5%)."

As for the regulation on cosmetic surgery for youth, a little more than half, at 57.2%, agreed that "All cosmetic surgery operations should be banned except for those that rectify deformities and those help the medical and psychological well-being of teenagers." However, about 88% also agreed to the statements that "Consultation should be mandatory before cosmetic surgery for teenagers," "The consent of parents (guardians) should be mandatory for cosmetic surgery for youth," and "A deliberation period (time to think) should be given after a youth receives a consultation for cosmetic surgery."

The rate of agreement was high on the need to strengthen the safety

of cosmetic surgery. 89.8% agreed that "Consultation with the person in charge of the procedure (the doctor) should be mandatory before cosmetic plastic surgery," 90.5% agreed that "The person in charge of the procedure (the doctor) should provide sufficient information to the consumer about cosmetic surgery," 90.7% agreed that "The person in charge of the procedure (the doctor) must absolutely notify the consumer if there is a risk of after-effects or side effects from the procedure," 90.9% agreed that a fine has to be strengthened in the case that cosmetic surgery is performed on a body part that was not agreed upon by the consumer, 90.7% agreed that the fine has to be strengthened in the case that cosmetic surgery is not carried out by the doctor that the consumer designated, but a different doctor, and 89.2% agreed that CCTVs should be mandatorily installed in order to prevent medical disputes following cosmetic plastic surgery.

V. Conclusion and policy tasks

1. Conclusion

Gendered appearance with a focus on the body has been handled indifferently in government policy, even though gender inequality is a large domain in Korean society. This study examined obsession about appearance and the choice of cosmetic plastic surgery due to discrimination and stigma against women, and the actual state of health risks and health conditions in this process. This occurs under Korean society's unequal gender structure and strong demands regarding women's social image and bodies, and it was confirmed that women are exposed to unhealthy health activities, including cosmetic plastic surgery, as

involuntary choices. It was also confirmed that the more this process continues and intensifies, the more it leads to eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia, and this has an effect on everyday depression and suicidal thoughts as well. Those who choose cosmetic surgery should receive notice and explanation before surgery at the actual medical site, and their consent should be received, but it was confirmed that consent was received selectively, or not at all, or was received by non-medical personnel, meanwhile exposing patients to side effects and health risks. In the survey analysis results, in cases where prior notice and consent were not received, there was a high correlation with side effects and mental health risk.

In South Korea, there still exists distortion of appearance/figure, and body, and it has a lot of influence on behaviors that are healthy and unhealthy. This distortion is very closely related to our society's demands about appearance/figure/body and the gender-discriminatory structure and influences it. The nation should now pay that much attention to unhealthy accidents and behaviors and health problems resulting from distortion about the appearance, the figure, and the gendered body, and actively prepare policy measures for improvement. Below are policy tasks based on the research results.

2. Policy tasks

- 1) Transition toward a society of positive awareness about appearance and respect for diversity
- (1) Strengthen national campaigns and publicity to improve positive awareness about appearance and to eradicate hate and prejudice against appearances deviating from social norms

The Body Positive movement, which began in the United States and is centered there, contains a clear message to love our bodies just as they are. According to a media report on the local situation in the United States, various new changes are visible in the fashion and beauty industry that had previously sought a uniform standard of beauty, and although they may be mentioned behind others, the winds of diverse change are blowing to include the appearance of plus-size models and plus-size mannequins, the emergence of news anchors wearing eyeglasses, and changes in the regulations on the appearance of flight attendants.

Although not presented in this text, the survey in the original research study asked several questions about the practice called "Escape the Corset," in which women refuse to meet certain standards of appearance that people believe correspond with their gender. Of these women, 47.0% responded that they "Dislike a feminine appearance or style of dressing and had cut their hair short." Of these women, 26.6% said they had cut their hair short once or twice, but the remaining 20.4% said they cut their hair short sometimes or often. The background is a breakaway from femininity. When asked whether they "Have ever gone to school or work without makeup because they do not like a feminine appearance or style of dressing," 41.9% of women said they do sometimes or often. In addition, 38.2% said that they wear glasses instead of contact lenses because they dislike being feminine, and 25.5% of the respondents said that they sometimes or often wear small sizes for men instead of form-fitting women's clothing or women's clothing with that is cut short, such as T-shirts and shorts. Regarding wearing men's clothing, 49.2% of women in their teens and 44.7% in their 20s said they do so occasionally or frequently, which was 10-20% higher than those in their 30s and older. Also, 8.5% of the respondents said they don't like being

feminine, so they sometimes or often go to school or work without wearing a brassiere. Here also, women in their teens and 20s accounted for more than the average, at 13.1% and 13.6%, respectively. As such, we confirmed that a considerable number of women in Korean society are joining the "Escape the Corset" movement because they dislike the uniform idea of feminine beauty that already exists. In fact, the "Escape the Corset" movement is actively being conducted not only offline, but also online, including on YouTube.

The "Body Positive" and "Escape the Corset" movements have different goals and meanings. However, these movements served as an opportunity for those who were subjected to prejudice and stigma from society because of their appearance and body to enter into society again, and in addition, positively influenced social awareness about diverse appearances and bodies against the existing, uniform norms for appearance. This part is already being confirmed in Western countries, where the "Escape the Corset" and "Body Positive" movements began.

In Korea as well, the "Body Positive" and "Escape the Corset" movements are also being carried out by various organizations. However, these activities have not been sustained and have not received public attention. In order for their movement to spread throughout all of society, all institutions dealing with appearance and body must embrace the meaning and positivity carried by this movement, and the movement of change in each institution/area/sector must begin together. It is necessary to morally and financially support the organizations and institutions that lead this movement so that these movements, which help to respect the diversity in appearance and body, and that help positive thinking, can continue throughout all of society. It is also necessary for the country to actively advertise and campaign to the public to respect diversity and

ban stigma in relation to appearance/body.

- (2) Strengthen the active implementation and substance of education on the diversity of appearances/bodies and body image for growing children and adolescents

If the aforementioned campaigns and promotions are targeted at the entire nation with messages to love one's body more and exercise the right of independence and decision-making about one's body, there should be more education conducted on a smaller scale. In particular, education for growing children and adolescents is very essential. A diversity of races live in Western countries such as the United States, and respect for their appearance and the diversity of their bodies is very important in their daily lives, and this is also included in the educational field. In particular, the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) in the U.S. is responsible for forming a nationwide network, solving problems with eating disorders or problems in the community related to appearance/body, and providing support for positive appearance/body. The main project that NEDA is promoting for children and adolescents is "Modeling Healthy Attitudes for Young People." It encourages people to eat a balanced diet and exercise regularly, rather than dieting to lose weight, and above all, not to judge or discriminate against the other people's appearances and bodies, and combines the perspective of gender equality while stressing the importance of respect for various appearances and physical aspects.

In Korea as well, within in the national sex education standards for middle school, there is an area of "Human Development" that includes education under the theme of "Body Image of Myself and Others." The objective of this education is to "know the meaning of images about the

bodies of myself and others and to distinguish between positive and negative body images, in order to practice positive body images of myself and others." The activities include sharing thoughts about the body, drawing myself with my desired appearance, and finding my own unique beauty. Detailed contents include drawing the figure I want, starting with the meaning of the image of the body, the causes of and influences on the formation of negative body images, efforts to form a positive body image, and conducting a campaign to criticize "lookism."

Based on the content above, we can see that education about body image is currently being undertaken in schools. However, through the fact-finding survey for this study, and based on secondary data such as the National Health and Nutrition Survey, we have confirmed that many citizens have a distorted idea about their appearance, and in addition, a large number of citizens are experiencing obsessions, such as caring too much about what others think about their appearance and having no choice but to take care of their appearance every day due to the fact that Korean society is still strictly setting standards for feminine and masculine looks.

Although the contents of the applied education included physical images, as referenced above, there are still many people living with appearance obsession due to appearance distortion and pressure to manage their appearance, and since adolescents and youth are in a more serious situation, the related education should be that active. To this end, the education ministry and local education offices should thoroughly evaluate and monitor the changes at the school sites, such as whether educational activities are properly operated, whether improvements in students' physical image and distortion of appearance are being made through actual related education, as opposed to evaluating through only

documents that were submitted, and whether they are pursuing diversity by loving their own bodies and respecting others' bodies and appearance. In addition, education is also conducted by school teachers such as health teachers, so related education for them should be conducted so that the people who provide education can sufficiently acquire gender discourse on the body and appearance, in addition to providing education at simply the level of knowledge. Therefore, both the activeness and substance of the education at the school site has to be exhaustive so educators can deliver the message to students, and so that there is sufficient discussion among students so this can be put into practice through real activities. To this end, the Ministry of Education, the local education offices, and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family should actively promote cooperative partnerships through the integration and exchange of education resources.

2) Respect for the diversity of appearances and bodies in industries related to appearance and body, and the creation of an actively gender-equal environment.

(1) Broadcasting/communications and publishing/printing sectors

① Strengthen monitoring of broadcasting programs that encourage uniform and gendered appearances and bodies

Unlike in the past, when broadcasting was only possible in certain specialized institutions, today's broadcasting programs have become more diverse along with consumer needs, and we have now entered an era where individual broadcasting is freely possible with or without special skills.

In the case of terrestrial broadcasting, through many corrections over

time, many contents have disappeared that were gender-discriminatory, or that showed a uniform, distorted femininity or masculinity. Nevertheless, problems are still being pointed out through monitoring and internal and external evaluations. However, as various broadcasting programs are being developed and produced, and in addition, various contents from overseas are easily accessible through various media such as YouTube, we can see that the situation has gone back to square one. There are many areas where broadcasting regulations are not applicable for the reasons of individual creation, creativity, and personal broadcasting targeting specific people. As a result, a huge amount of raw broadcasting content is coming to consumers in real time. This includes various broadcasting programs that encourage hate for the appearance and body, and encourage cosmetic surgery.

Korean society has already opened an era of one smartphone for each person. More than ever, everyday access to media content transcends time and space, and against this backdrop, the number of people who are both creating and seeking new media is endlessly increasing. Recently, a complete revision of the Broadcasting Act was proposed, which suggests 16 items to be included in the broadcasting review regulations. These include "matters on respect for human rights," "matters on gender equality," "matters on the protection and healthy character formation of children and youth," "matters on the prohibition of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, region, and religion," and "matters on the refinement of language." Of course, appearance and body are not specifically mentioned in these matters, but they are covered by them. There are still many controversial issues, and how to supplement and adopt them are issues for debate. Here, one particularly controversial point is that one-person broadcasting is excluded from regulation. There

are several reasons for this, but the population of people that encounters the latest news and information through YouTube is increasing rapidly, and especially among young people, the number is very high. Most YouTube broadcasts are providing good information. However, since some broadcasting companies produce hateful and discriminatory content, it is necessary to review the Broadcasting Act again to ensure that broadcasting considers the public interest, gender equality, the mass popularity of contents, and the soundness of contents to the extent that these contents are shared.

- ② Strengthen education for people involved in broadcasting, such as cast members and production crew, on gender sensitivity and respect for diverse appearances

The cast members in broadcasts are very diverse, and as people who impart information to the public, they have an important role as intermediaries. There are instances when they make discriminatory, hateful, and violent remarks, and if that becomes a social problem, it sometimes comes to a conclusion when the broadcaster posts an apology, or if the relevant person leaves the show. However, problems like this are occurring on a regular basis. This is highly related to cast members' low gender sensitivity.

While expressions or references to hate and discrimination against women are being handled in a socially sensitive way these days, broadcasting companies are being cautious, but these kinds of expressions about femininity still being used, and women are still being judged. In addition, hateful and discriminatory language and expressions about men are transmitted to consumers through broadcasting without being fixed. Viewers who watch this understand the contents as simply

a situation to laugh at, but no one thinks about how badly the person feels who was targeted by the statement or expression. A man's body shape, whether thin or fat, becomes subjected to laughter. As this study clearly confirmed, body type is an important risk factor in men's mental health. Nevertheless, blunt expressions about men's looks and bodies can be heard with no filter on many cable channels and YouTube. Distorting or stigmatizing a particular gender, age, race, appearance, or body to increase viewer ratings should be avoided.

As such, gender-sensitivity education for cast members of broadcast programs is urgently needed. Of course, there are guidelines for the cast, but the truth is that there is almost no education for them. In reality, there are regular, fixed performers and panel performers, and it is true that in the case of panel performers, there is difficulty in educating them. In the very least, education for the regular performers is very essential. In particular, since the nature of broadcast media is that many programs are conducted mainly through the means of language and behavior, gender sensitivity education should be included so these means are not utilized to portray situations that are gender discriminatory, hateful, or violent. Although programs for viewers make consumers feel uncomfortable or just make them laugh, it is also necessary to have careful program development and make people in broadcasting take responsibility for programs to the extent that these programs can potentially influence discrimination and hatred against others as the subject of laughter in their daily lives.

Furthermore, people in production who plan and make programs, such as producers, reporters, anchors, and writers, also need gender sensitivity education. No matter how high the gender sensitivity of the performing cast, if the contents of the broadcast are discriminatory, hateful, uniform,

or distorted, the problem cannot be solved by the cast's capabilities alone. Therefore, multi-faceted support should be provided in parallel for the education of those who are new in broadcasting, and for training education for media foundation officials to develop gender-sensitive capabilities through education, such as monitoring and correcting contents that are gender-discriminatory, hateful, or distorted.

- ③ Prohibition of the sexual objectification of women's appearance/bodies in various publications/printed materials of public institutions, and development and distribution of guidelines

In our daily lives, we are exposed to a wide variety of information. This information is provided not only through the Internet, but also through various publications and printed matter. In the latter part of this paper, we have made specific proposals regarding information on the Internet, so here, I would like to mention publications and printed materials. We encounter many advertisements in our daily lives. Here, printed ads are mainly filled with information that introduces agencies and their services. People often appear in these ads, and they are mainly men with muscular, brawny builds and women with very thin and pretty figures. This is generally the case, even if they are not ads promoting health clubs or gyms, and the same is true of public relations publications (such as guides or pamphlets introducing policies), which government offices are equipped with and are provided to the public.

In particular, information such as promotional materials that people encounter through government offices are closely related to the daily lives of local residents and are also highly utilized. For the people who see them, these materials can highly impact their perceptions about appearance. In addition, printed promotional materials used by private

or individual businesses can influence people even more negatively, as the information that they provide is even more visualized than the information distributed by public institutions. First of all, in public institutions such as government offices, there are various publications and printed matter such as promotional pamphlets and booklets. Images that sexually objectify a specific appearance or body, or that can have an effect on body distortion or obsession, should be banned from being published or printed in these places. To this end, it is necessary to prepare a body that deliberates on publications and the printed materials of public institutions before they are printed, and through this, conduct a full survey of printed and published materials of all public institutions and review ways that approved contents can be printed and published. In addition, government institutions should reject distorted appearances and bodies, sexual objectification, discrimination, and hatred in their promotional materials and printed booklets, and instead develop and distribute guidelines on respectful ways to deal with diverse appearances and bodies.

(2) Fashion and clothing manufacturing sectors

① Create and display mannequins with diverse body shapes

"Last June, Nike, one of the world's largest sportswear brands, introduced a plus-size mannequin, a departure from their long-time, thin mannequin that was size 8-9, and had no fat." Since then, there have been various opinions expressed about it. Some have criticized it for demeaning the plus-size body type, others criticized it for minimizing the health problems of obesity, while others felt that plus-size mannequins encourage people of various body types to take care of their health.

As also confirmed in the survey for this study, women, in particular, had a strong tendency to believe that despite their normal weight based on BMI, the body type they have now is not a healthy type, and is far from the ideal body type. What women perceived as the most ideal body type was actually an underweight body type when BMI was calculated based on actual height and weight. This shows that the standards of feminine appearance and body for women in Korean society are very strict. Most of all, this study clearly confirmed that appearance distortion, which is perceived to be the ideal body type even though it is actually underweight, causes internal conflicts about one's appearance by making a person care too much about what others think, by causing anxious and obsessive feelings when people worry about not conforming to social standards, and leads people to unhealthy weight-loss behaviors or repeatedly choosing cosmetic surgery, ultimately posing a risk to physical and mental health.

In this current era of rapid growth in the clothing and fashion industries, mannequins, which are still skinny and thin, are imprinted unconsciously as the standard of beauty for those who see and encounter them. At the same time, they cause others to criticize and stigmatize people who deviate from this standard. Therefore, it is necessary to produce and display various sizes of mannequins in all the sites of the clothing and fashion industry, so people can recognize a diversity in appearances and bodies in their daily lives. While this may become mandatory, it is first necessary for workers in the clothing industry to see various sizes of mannequins and to recognize the need to change their own thinking, and then make recommendations to implement changes. This could also be a Body Positive movement, as noted earlier.

② Produce and sell diverse sizes of clothing

As the diverse sizes of mannequins proposed earlier are not enough, it is also important to recommend that products of various sizes should be displayed and sold in clothing stores, in addition to changing awareness through the actual display of various sizes of mannequins. This should be applied equally online and offline.

Korea has also been selling one-size-fits-all clothing in some shopping malls for a few years. However, if you actually visit a store or go online to purchase one-size-fits-all clothing, you will find out that it is still limited to certain body sizes. Moreover, companies that sell "plus-size" clothing still use skinny, thin models for males and females in their clothing advertisements. This means that the company has a prejudice and stigma toward certain bodies. As a result, some communities are buying and selling plus-size clothing at the individual level.

The clothing industry mainly aims to provide the clothing that various people need to flatter their bodies and appearances, and that they can wear comfortably and appropriately so they can do activities in their daily lives. As such, the clothing they provide should not be limited to just those with skinny, thin, or regular body types; they should equally display and sell clothes of various sizes for everyone to use. This is limited simply by clothing vendors' efforts. Clothing producers, such as clothing vendors, should equally produce clothes in a variety of sizes. In addition, there shouldn't be just skinny and thin male and female models in fashion shows. The fashion industry should make various attempts, such as changing the direction of the fashion industry to include people with regular or large bodies, to the extent that all people want to participate in fashion trends.

In the past, clothing fashions were limited to those with skinny and thin bodies, figures, and appearances, and competition to lead the market at home and abroad was fierce. As a result, there was a tendency for the fashion industry and all related industries and products to use a specific body, figure, and appearance. Today, as awareness that people's individuality and expression should be respected has become widespread, we have to accommodate diversity and respect people whose individuality and expression are different. Accordingly, such efforts putting this into practice are required throughout the fashion and clothing industries as well. By doing so, those who have had no choice but to wear clothes that do not fit their bodies, or have had no choice but to wear clothes that they don't want, and who have therefore been subjected to more prejudice and hate, should be guaranteed various choices.

- ③ Through enacting the "Photoshop Act," strengthen legal regulations to provide information related to the fashion industry's use of biased and distorted body images

Several Western countries, including France and the United Kingdom, have enacted Photoshop Laws to prevent the negative effects of overly thin models on TV and media advertising on regular people. For example, they made it mandatory to record BMIs when models are used in fashion shows. Also included is the duty to state if photos are modified or edited through Photoshop when model photos are released through media, etc. The main purpose of the law is to make the public aware of the difference between real and edited photos. Although regulations vary slightly from country to country, France punishes those who violate the law, and the United Kingdom prohibits the advertisement if there is a severe degree of photo modification or editing.

To further explain the French case, the Photoshop Act came into force on October 1, 2017. From that point on, all photos that have been modified have to state "photo modified" (edited), and in particular, they have to state what has been changed on the body shape (whether something has been made thinner or thicker, if someone has been made taller, their legs longer, etc.). In addition, models working as professionals in France must present medical documents certifying their health, one part of which is BMI. Violations of this result in a fine of about 38,000 pounds. On March 19, 2012, Israel adopted the Photoshop Act, which prohibits anyone with a BMI of less than 18.5 (actually underweight) from being on stage as a model. The background of this legislation is that countless adolescents and young people see overly thin or slim body shapes on models and become envious, and they are exposed to physical and mental health problems such as eating disorders in order to obtain such a shape. Such regulations are also being introduced in many other countries as well, including Belgium, Spain, and Italy.

As a first in the Korean fashion industry, the late André Kim had declared that he would not put a model who was too thin on the stage in one of his fashion shows. The reason for that was that while the model could face risks while working in fashion, and such thin models could also have a negative influence, such as eating disorders, on youth who see them. However, after he put that into practice, there have not been the same practices in the fashion industry. It is of course necessary for people in the industry to make an effort, and it is increasingly important for laws and systems to be prepared. In fact, according to this survey as well, many people said they want to be skinny and slim when they see a person like that. In particular, there were many responses stating this from young people. In addition, the stronger the internalization of

stereotypes about appearance, the more people chose cosmetic plastic surgery due to their weight concerns and worrying about what other people think of them, and fears of falling short of society's standards for the body. In addition, there were many who had psychological problems such as depression and suicidal thoughts due to their worries about appearance and body.

In Korea as well, many male and female celebrities are having their photos taken, and a considerable number of them are edited before being put into various magazines. Consumers who don't know about this will think that how these entertainers' bodies look in the magazines is a realistic, ideal type of appearance and body. Now, through the "Photoshop Act," which is being enforced in various Western countries, we in Korea should also write the words "modified (edited) photo" on corrected photos before they are released. If this is violated, legal measures should be taken, and a system should be prepared so an organization that deliberates and judges photos before they are released can clearly review them. These moves may lead to voluntary practices in the industry concerned. As France implemented the Photoshop Act on October 1, 2017, Getty Images, the world's largest photo site, also announced a policy to ban modification of models' appearances/bodies. Furthermore, some positive effects are visible, such as the participation of even some famous models.

(3) Medical sector

- ① Strict regulation of false and exaggerated advertisements for cosmetic plastic surgery

There is a limit to how much individuals can improve through exercise

in order to reach the standards of appearance that everyone envies in Korean society. Medical intervention is essential to create a body shape in an easier, more comfortable and more desired direction and to change one's image. For this reason, the scale of cosmetic surgery is expanding day by day. Now, there are many foreigners who also visit Korea for cosmetic surgery, so much that Korea is now recognized by the phrase "cosmetic plastic surgery" in the international community, as part of the country's identity. This shows how technically excellent cosmetic surgery is in Korea, but also implies that getting plastic surgery is a common practice.

For this reason, the cosmetic surgery industry is attracting consumers by fully understanding their complexes about their appearance and body and providing customized information for each body part. Advertising plays a very important role in this process. However, a problem is that the information contained in the advertisement is not trustworthy. Information is very important. In particular, information in medical advertisements is directly related to the individual's life (health) and safety. Nevertheless, false advertising and exaggerated advertisements related to cosmetic surgery are not just a problem today. According to a recent survey conducted by the Korea Press Foundation, of all medical advertisements, most were for cosmetic surgery and obesity, at a rate of 68.5%, followed by dental implants/braces, discs/joints, and vision correction, in that order, while regarding the trustworthiness of the relevant medical ads, cosmetic surgery was the very lowest, at 82.7%.

However, among the various problems that occur through false and exaggerated advertisements, suffering from side effects is a crucial problem. As confirmed in this study, the number of disputes related to cosmetic surgery has steadily increased from 51 in 2013, to 83 in 2016,

to 160 in 2018. In particular, young women in their 20s and 30s have the highest number of cases every year. As such, cosmetic surgery advertisements targeting young women who want thin, skinny body types and beautiful appearances are composed of very many layers.

Generally, there are promotions at the level of individual hospitals, but there is also advertising through various institutions and channels, starting with roadside advertisements and electric signage, as well as public transportation, parking lots, and gyms. The most severe of all is advertising online. It's seductive because it's so easy, and the images provided are visually shocking. Here, there is a lot of false and exaggerated information. In the survey for this study, Internet homepages, blogs, and internet cafes were the main channels by which people encountered cosmetic surgery advertisements, at 36.1%, with public transportation such as buses and subways next at 26%, then social networking services, mobile apps, and cell phone text messages, etc. at 24%, and finally cosmetic surgery hospitals, billboards, and electronic signage at 12.6%. In this study, more than half of women saw cosmetic surgery advertisements through these channels, with female youth having the highest rate of encountering advertisements through these channels at 62.4%. Most importantly, 10.2% of young women who encountered these advertisements had cosmetic surgery, and 57.4% said that although they didn't do it right away, they wanted to do it. This is the same as saying almost 70% were influenced by cosmetic surgery advertisements.

Therefore, it is necessary to again fully review advertisements for cosmetic surgery. Here, in addition to existing newspapers, banners, electronic signs, and means of transportation both on the interior and exterior, there should be more consistent monitoring than there is now to strictly manage/supervise and check whether there is false or

exaggerated information advertised, beginning with internet advertising, and also ads in recent smartphone applications (including video and voice). In fact, the Ministry of Health and Welfare and the Korea Internet Advertising Foundation conducted an intensive inspection of Internet advertisements (applications, social commerce, etc.), focusing on the cosmetic plastic surgery industry from January to February this year, and reported that of those checked, a total of 1,059 advertisements violated the Medical Law, and 278 medical institutions were caught in violation. Furthermore, the system for deliberation before such ads are posted has to be strengthened a lot to prevent false and exaggerated advertisements from being posted on the Internet. In addition, regulations are needed to punish those who have posted such illegal advertisements if it is confirmed that they posted it, and to seek aggravated punishment for those who actually harm consumers. In addition, pre-deliberation is conducted through the Medical Advertising Review Committee ("Medical Service Act," Article 57 Paragraph 2, (Deliberation Committees for Medical Advertisements)). In Article 57, Paragraph 5, the law states that the committee includes private experts such as doctors, dentists, Oriental medicine doctors, pharmacists, and other consumer groups. Among the persons who may be included, listed as #7 is "A person recommended by the head of a corporation established pursuant to Article 32 of the Civil Act mainly for the purpose of expanding the social participation and promoting the welfare of women" (see the Ministry of Government Legislation, National Law Information Center, Medical Service Act). It is necessary to consider appointing gender experts to the committee to the extent that women are connected with cosmetic plastic surgery.

- ② Making prior notice and consent mandatory regarding risks of cosmetic plastic surgery and related situations

No matter how small the body part is that is being operated on, cosmetic plastic surgery involves the risks of medical intervention. Therefore, it is mandatory to inform the patient of the risks before surgery and to obtain their consent. However, through this survey, it was confirmed that this is not the case on the front lines. The survey asked questions in seven large categories (cost of procedure/surgery, provider, professional qualifications, method, side effects, pain, and measures to deal with side effects). Regarding who gave information, we found that in 50-60% of the cases, information was provided by the attending physician, with nurses or counselors providing information in the remaining 40-50% of cases. About 20% said they did not receive any information regarding side effects or the expertise of their doctors. Of course, people can receive information through a nurse or counselor about costs and how to manage side effects, but other than that, the doctor in charge of the surgery (attending physician) should explain who is in charge of the cosmetic plastic surgery, what the expertise of that person is, the method of surgery, and the kinds of side effects that can occur. There are many reasons why this is important, but as confirmed through the analysis in this study, the rate of negative side effects depended on who the information provider was, and in particular, side effects were the lowest when the attending physician provided the necessary information that was requested. The recent increase in the number of medical dispute settlements presented in this study is also considered to be highly connected to the absence of prior notice and consent procedures at these medical sites, or the insufficiency (absence) of explanation and measures about side effects given by the attending physician.

As previously emphasized, cosmetic plastic surgery is inescapably a medical intervention, so it is necessary to give prior notice to consumers (patients) about the risks and give them essential information about the course of the procedure/surgery, and it is necessary to receive their permission before proceeding. Violating this and then proceeding, or omitting or selectively providing related information, or having information that should be provided by the attending physician provided by non-medical or other personnel instead, must be avoided. A thorough on-site inspection is necessary to ensure that these kinds of situations no longer occur at medical sites. For example, an inspection could include whether surgery whether patients who do not need surgery are being attracted to have surgery done by unqualified persons, whether there are measures and quality management in the course of surgery and recovery for complications and sequela according to side effects, and whether there are proper measures prepared for coping with unforeseen emergency situations.

- ③ Collect statistics on damages from the side effects of cosmetic plastic surgery and actively utilize them for improvement

As presented in this study, medical statistics on cosmetic plastic surgery are collected at the national level, but the scope of these statistics that are collected is very narrow, such as the number of long-term care hospitals, the number of medical personnel, and the distribution of these by region. However, when we examine the statistics on medical disputes that were settled in grievance mediation that were presented in this study and, while not covered in this study, the internal data (e.g., the number of consultations, etc.) collected by researchers on cosmetic plastic surgery through the Korea Consumer Agency, we confirmed that the

number of disputes where grievance mediation was used has been increasing each year.

This may reflect the increased demand for cosmetic surgery, but it also implies that the cosmetic plastic surgery treatment environment is still not improving. In particular, cosmetic plastic surgery is almost always an elective procedure, rather than a medically necessary one, so it is not covered by National Health Insurance. The National Health Insurance Corporation also does not have accurate statistics on incidents and accidents related to these medical procedures. Nevertheless, as confirmed in this survey, more than a quarter of women have experienced cosmetic surgery in their lifetimes, with nearly 40% of all women and 46.4% of young women having experienced it, and while the size and extent of side effects may differ, a total average of about 10% experienced side effects, so the absolute number is not small. Regarding foreign patients, as presented in this study, the number of foreign patients drawn to Korea for cosmetic plastic surgery has increased by a factor of 24 times compared to 10 years ago, and the number of patients coming to Korea for dermatology has increased by a factor of 11 compared to 10 years ago, so the market for cosmetic surgery is expanding rapidly both domestically and abroad.

As such, the Ministry of Health and Welfare, which is in charge of the work related to cosmetic surgery, should regularly collect complete, enumerated surveys and other related data on medical activities that are not covered by National Health Insurance and that are conducted by medical institutions providing cosmetic surgery-related services, such as plastic surgery departments and dermatology departments, to clearly identify problems in the current situation and, based on this, set up improvements. To this end, a system to deliver statistical information

should also be prepared to construct statistics together with a system for evaluation, which would make improvement policies for the statistical system through continuous management, supervision, and analysis.

(4) Labor sector

① Mandatory use of a standard resume form to ban hiring based on looks

As confirmed in the fact-finding survey for this study, in order to lose weight, many people do not exercise, but choose unhealthy diets and foods or surgery. Of those people, more than 80% said they did it to gain confidence in human relationships through appearance or body management. There was not a big difference between men and women. By age, however, young people in particular responded that the reason for taking care of their appearance, outside of becoming an entertainer or getting married, is to get a job. As such, it is possible to guess that appearance and physique are important factors that are applied in hiring. For this reason, about 70% said that the photos that are attached on job applications, which are used to judge applicants on the basis of their appearance, should no longer be used. In particular, 85.1% of young women agreed with this.

Recently, the Ministry of Employment and Labor posted a standard job application form in accordance with Article 5 of the Act on the Fairness of Employment Procedures (Ministry of Employment and Labor homepage [17]). If we look here, there is no space to attach a photo that can be used to discriminate against the applicant. It also does not include sensitive information such as age, gender, or academic background. And at the bottom of this, it states, "Take care to not list

things that are not related to job performance, such as physical qualities about the applicant, such as their appearance, height, weight, the region they came from, whether or not they are married, property, or the educational backgrounds, occupations, and property information of the applicants' lineal ascendants (i.e., parents and grandparents) and siblings." If we look at this, all information that could be used in advance in a biased or discriminatory way was deleted. The problem, however, is whether the current standard job application forms are being used properly at the actual labor sites. Although this study did not mention it, the survey asked if people had experienced discrimination because of their appearance when seeking a job (including part-time jobs), and 13.7% said yes. There was not much of a difference between men and women. In the policy demand survey, about 80% agreed that "Management should be strengthened to prevent job openings from listing requirements related to appearance (such as height, face, etc.)." In particular, 93.3% of young women agreed. In addition, as confirmed by the survey in this study, many men and women who had cosmetic surgery were informed of the need to manage their appearance by acquaintances/colleagues, who pointed it out. This shows that appearance is still considered to be a requirement for the job at labor and hiring sites. In particular, we can see that the requirements for women's appearance are even more serious.

As such, it is necessary to consider making it mandatory for the Ministry of Employment and Labor's standard resume to be used not just by the public sector, but also by the private sector.

- ② Strengthening the management and supervision of discrimination based on appearance in hiring, and in the workplace

In addition to the making it mandatory for the standard job application of the Ministry of Employment and Labor to be used at all labor sites in both the public and private sectors as recommended above, on-site management and supervision should be carried out in parallel. In addition, the labor site is a place where diverse people are assigned their own individual duties as members of a group. In the process, there are various discriminatory situations that can take place, such as discrimination based on appearance. The law banning harassment in the workplace has been in effect since July 16 this year. Although there is no content about physical appearance or explanations about cases in the related manual (Ministry of Employment and Labor, 2019), on-site management and supervision is important, as there can be harassment related to this.

It is necessary to increase labor supervisors in order to promote this on-site. It is also necessary, through gender sensitivity education, to strengthen supervisors' ability to manage and supervise discrimination against appearance and gender when it has been confirmed to be present in the workplace. Therefore, the existing gender-sensitive education should also go beyond theoretical education such as conceptions of gender, and develop into task-oriented, practical education on how individual workers should bring gender sensitivity into their duties on the job.

- 3) Strengthen integrated research on appearance (body), gender, and health, and set up and promote the National Health Policy
- (1) Regularization of integrated research on appearance (body), gender, and health

All this time, there has been no integrated research propelled on the national level on appearance (body), gender, and health. In some restricted domains, private organizations or public institutions have made attempts at research regarding cosmetic plastic surgery. This research is almost the only one attempted by a national research institute, and it is also almost the first time that a survey has grasped the general public's awareness about, and experiences with, appearance, appearance management, and cosmetic plastic surgery.

This research clearly had limitations. Appearance can be defined with a very wide variety of terms, including body, figure, and body types, and is defined not just by what is visible, but is also by social structures that are invisible, and this study did not contain all of these sufficiently. In addition, there was clearly a limitation in sufficiently grasping the differences between people's mindset, attitudes, and experiences with appearance from a gender-sensitive perspective using only a survey. Most of all, the aforementioned "Body Positive" movement that started in Western society has been strengthened very much by being linked to the issue of public health. Eating disorders played a major role in this, and also played a major role in expanding national policies to enhance health, such as the promotion of physical activities, eating healthy food, obesity management, and preventative activities.

An individual's appearance (body) is something they are born with, but the mindset and modifications associated with the body are altered by social conventions and social demands. This study focuses on the latter. Furthermore, we have to consider the fact that the responses to these social demands and the situation around these demands, as well as the resulting biases and influences, are quite different for women and men. As confirmed in the survey for this study, for women, appearance (body)

is the standard of social success outside of (or more than), the individual's ability, and not only women, but also men, agreed with that statement. Society gives women standards for appearance (body) to that extent, and in order to not deviate from those standards, women pursue management of their appearance and various ways of management (even if they are unhealthy). The extent of the pursuit of this management is the practical and urgent part. This is a social demand that doesn't pass after the short season of youth, but rather, it stays throughout a woman's entire life. Recently, these kinds of demands from society have been placed on male youth as well.

Women cannot reject social demands to lose weight, even during pregnancy. As confirmed in the survey for this study, 33% responded that they managed their weight during pregnancy. Of course, women's responses are high, but men also said that there is a need to control women's appearance even during pregnancy. The problem is that anxiety and obsession with appearance due to weight loss pose risks to health. The survey for this study clearly confirmed that the more people care about what others think about their appearance, and the stronger their internalization of wanting to have a skinny and thin body type when they see other people with that appearance, the more they agree with social conventions about women's appearance, and the more anxiety they have about meeting social standards for appearance, the higher their risk for eating disorders. In addition, it was confirmed that the more situations like this that people are exposed to individually and in groups, the higher their risk of severe levels of depression and suicidal impulses.

To the extent that internal and external responses to social norms on the appearance and bodies of women and men, as well as responses about others have proliferated, integrated research is needed to see how we can

effectively intervene within the social structure regarding appearance (body), gender, and health.

In Western societies, including the U.S., social costs are at a very serious level due to obesity. In Korea as well, the proportion of the population that has been obese since childhood and adolescence due to Western eating habits is steadily increasing. However, we have hurriedly tried to solve the problem of obesity by looking at it as simply a problem of disease, and have been trying to control it with medical intervention and food policy. However, in parallel with this, in Western societies, they try to understand the definition of men and women's appearances (bodies) and gender attributes within the social structure. The reason for this is that they could eventually be risk factors for obesity. As we will mention later, we must now absolutely use images of appearance (body) and figures in policy related to obesity prevention. That is because only then can we develop policies for this based on policy reviews and research and clearly identify practical problems. Therefore, integrated research on appearance (body), gender, and health should be regularized.

- (2) Establishment and promotion of topics on appearance diversity and health through health policy at the national level
- ① Strengthening the survey related to my appearance (figure) and body image in the national statistics

As of now, no integrated surveys focusing on appearance (body) and gender, such as the survey for this research, have been conducted in the national statistics. In addition, the National Health and Nutrition Survey and the Online Survey of Youth Health ask respondents their subjective opinion about their weight and whether or not they try to control it and

its shape, and in some surveys, respondents are asked about methods to control weight. Such surveys have been conducted since 2003 in the case of the National Health and Nutrition Survey, while the Online Survey of Youth Health has been conducted since 2006, but no policy projects have been set up regarding appearance and physical image in the health promotion policies of any age group, including actual teenagers.

Utilizing these data, a study that examined how BMI and subjective Body Weight Perception (BWP) affect depression found that obesity (BMI) in itself has a high correlation with depression, but if the person's own perception of their body weight (BWP) was included (revising the variables), this effect was reduced or almost disappeared. Especially in female adults and young women, it was confirmed that the invisible BWP (their thoughts and perception) affected depression more than the actual visible BMI, and moreover, when BWP was factored in as a variable, the influence of BMI disappeared. This implies something important to the obesity prevention policies that we've conducted so far. While policies to simply prevent obesity are important, even more important policy for obesity prevention could be improving people's distorted perceptions and judgment of their own weight, appearance, and body, which they perceive according to their gender and age.

Accordingly, the subjective questions on perception of weight, weight loss, and ways to lose weight that are currently in the National Health and Nutrition Survey and the Online Survey of Youth Health, which have been conducted annually for over 10 years, should have their correlations between obesity and related health linked and analyzed, and this should be utilized as a basis for preparing policies on obesity prevention and body image. After passing through further discussion, it is necessary to add survey questions on the aspects of gender and social structure so

more data can be collected on social health aspects, and a basis can be prepared.

- ② Including indicators on appearance/physical image in the comprehensive health promotion plan as leading health determinant factors, and promoting related policies

Korea has been mapping out and promoting a comprehensive Health Plan every 10 years based on the Framework Act on National Health and Promotion. The plan covers almost every field of health, and in each field, it sets very detailed policy goals and performance indicators. However, appearance/physical image is not included here.

If we just look at other countries, we can see that they are in a different situation. Of course, other areas that are omitted in Korea's leading health determinant factors include the areas of (sexual) violence and sex and reproduction, as well as disaster and safety. If included in the Comprehensive National Health Promotion Plan, improvement measures can be prepared in connection with existing projects or by newly developing projects, and it would be possible to regularly establish performance indicators and regularly implement and check them. Accordingly, considering the health impact of appearance and physical image, and considering that this area is included as an important indicator (gender/female health indicator) abroad, Korea also needs to include this indicator when setting up the Comprehensive National Health Promotion Plan. Finally, in addition to the individual aspect, the aspect of social structure is included, so indicators should also be utilized as a way to check the structural problems of our society's gendered body, which are related to appearance and body, and make measures to improve it.

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