

# **Psychology Surrounding the Desire for Cosmetic Surgery by Youth in South Korea**

– Generating a hypothesis based on an analysis of interviews using  
M-GTA with those who have experienced cosmetic surgery –

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Modern society in Korea is experiencing serious problems regarding the importance of outward appearance. The purpose of this study is to clarify the reason why youth in South Korea wish to undergo cosmetic surgery by focusing on the current cosmetic surgery boom. This study is relevant to a society in which youth are struggling with the perceived importance of outward appearance and the competition derived therefrom, and it aims to understand the current social conditions of South Korea and reveal the mental outlook of those who wish to undergo such surgery.

The interviewees consisted of six Korean youth aged 22 to 25 years old who underwent cosmetic surgery. Through semi-structured interviews using the M-GTA method, 280 minutes of data was collected and a storyline was devised based on the results seen from 19 concepts and seven categories.

As a result, it is apparent that there is a serious problem regarding the perceived importance of one's outward appearance in modern Korean society. People too often tend to "judge a book by its cover," thus, young people who sometimes have an inferiority complex about their looks aim to undergo surgery because of the seven reasons of: Wanting to be a "winner" and "hoping to improve their self-image." However, there are physical conditions that have to be met in order to be allowed to undergo such surgery, such as whether one can afford to do so and safety consideration; thus, they only finally have surgery when they can satisfy three conditions, such as requirements regarding social background, mental outlook, and physical condition.

From the results, the hypothesis is that youth who live in Korean society often develop inferiority complexes regarding their looks and that they thus undergo cosmetic surgery in order to be appreciated by a society that puts high value on appearance. However, they don't make these feelings public because of a sense of shame, and they seem to wish to repeat such surgery continuously to improve their appearance if no risks exist.