

## The Consequence of Body Reproduction after Cosmetic Surgery among Women of Khorramabad

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### Abstract

*Beauty and beauty-seeking are part of human desires to achieve physical excellence, but the doubled desire to manipulate and intervene in it indicates a social problem, especially in epidemic conditions. In this paper, using anthropological approach and with the help of Bourdieu's theory of social capital, the phenomenon is investigated with respect to the findings of body reproduction. In this study, constructed interview has been used with 80 women aged between 18 and 40 years old in Khorramabad who had at least one cosmetic surgery for three hours. For this purpose, snowball sampling method was used to choose the statistical population up to theoretical saturation. The results showed that women in social, economic, physical and symbolic capital did not achieve the same position after surgery. The greatest improvement was related to the social capital that led people to achieve wider social networks and high-level social facilities. In the symbolic capital, temporary improvement is achieved in the circumstances, but it has not become stable social and cultural capital. Women's physical capital was also affected by public attitudes so that women have less independent assessment of the improvement of this kind of capital after cosmetic surgery. Regarding economic capital, it was concluded that cosmetic surgery was effective in achieving job positions, but it did not provide their career promotion.*

*Body reproduction, cosmetic surgery, consequence of body changing*

### 1. Statement of the Problem

In the transition from tradition to modernity, the body was the focus of attention such as a changeable product for the capitalist systems so that the body as a means for the formation of individual identity through use, caused to show individual differences and even became a mediator to make a difference between personal identity and body (Mead, 1962: 136). Along with the growth in consumerism and easy access to goods around the world regardless of geographic boundaries, changes in culture and visual forms were considered. The body, which has previously been considered as a rather religious element became a social category to show physical and social trends. Visual society tended to assess their non-uniform bodies or convey specific messages to its visual audience through the body (Azad& Chavoshian, 2002: 136). In other words, the body is affected by social and cultural beliefs that takes over it and provide individuals with satisfaction in respect to themselves or their body structure (Grogan, 2008: 138). Despite the material strength of the body, the body cannot be examined without its social and cultural aspects. Therefore, we can speak of multiple and diverse bodies (Akhvat, 2009: 25).

Although the body studies date back to the 19th century, (Le Breton, 2013: 23), but the dramatic growth of medical facilities in recent times has increased the tendency to change the body with the help of aggressive practices (Ghaderzadeh et al., 2014: 9). Recent developments in the formation of new ideas and new lifestyles in the West were effective in revising the reproduction of the social body. In addition, the role of the mass media (Ahmadnia, 2001: 85), power relations between the sexes (Foucault, 2004: 30) and even individuals' class affiliation (Cockerham, 2001: 15) in the tendency to the body reproduction or social reform are effectively assessed. In any case, the literature on cosmetic surgeries have studied the participants' causes by various social and psychological approaches, while little attention has been paid to the process after the surgery and implicit achievements of these cosmetic surgeries.

This research, by Bourdieu's theoretical approach, attempts to assess the general question that what have been the effects of the physical capital and its creating sources on the production of the social, symbolic and economic capital of women who had performed cosmetic surgery?

## 2. Literature Review

Alexander Mussap in a study "Acculturation, body concept and nutritional habits among Australian Muslim Women" studied the acceptance of Western culture and body dissatisfaction and nutritional habits of the Muslim women with non-European family history. The results of this study show that Muslim women who match themselves with western values, have greater potential for nutritional disorders. The unrealistic conception and unhealthy focus on weight loss to achieve the same figure of western women have forced them to follow strict regimes (Mussap, 2009: 537).

Trisha Dunkley et al. examined the body satisfaction and push for weight loss in young and elderly women who were Muslim and non-Muslim in Europe with emphasis on the role of acceptance of western and non-western dress in the United States. The used veil by women under study is classified in four categories; western veiled women, western veiled women with covered head, and women without western cover and unveiled women (60).

The results of the study showed that young women wear western dress with Islamic veil are more interested in the regime and diet and getting closer to western standards of beauty than women with western dress with or unveiled women. While, the older women who have been less susceptible to pressure to achieve western standards of beauty, have shown less dissatisfaction with their fitness (Dunkel, 2010: 59). Rezaei et al. in a study "Body management and its relationship with social factors" studied students at Mazandaran University using a field study. Their research results, which were obtained according to the views of social feminist, Foucault, Giddens and Goffman, indicates that the change of source symbols in today's world is the source of change in the field of body management. Consumerism, social pressure feeling and media consumption are three factors affecting the body management (Rezaei et al., 2010, 141-170).

In a study "Women's human identity in makeup and fashion challenge", it was indicated that women's tendency to fashion is affected by issues such as consumption pattern, lifestyle, fashion leaders, body awareness so that has a direct relation with socio economic class, role of mass media, globalization process and the capitalist system (Rafat-jah, 2007, 135-179).

Safiri and Ghasemi (2009, 83) in a study, "Social factors affecting body concept in young women and girls", concluded that social factors such as visual media, pressure of norms, family and society, standards and definitions of beauty in society and individual factors such as self-esteem and attention to the body and beauty care is effective in producing the body concept in women. Keyvanara et al. (2010, 47) in examining the social status of people who performed cosmetic surgery, found that they regard it as a symbolic expression of social status.

Movahed et al. (2010, 79-105) in their study concluded that respondents mentioned self-confidence as the most important factor for their beautification. While, the researchers' study that is more accurate indicates the social relations through which individuals gain benefits through beauty and beautification at social level. Poor Aqajan et al. examined the issue by a psychological approach in the direction of "self" evolution in a study "An examination of self evolution and tendency to cosmetic surgery". The results of this research show that the self evolution levelin applicants of cosmetic surgeries is lower than other applicants (2008: 43-50). Bahar and Qazi dealt with the analysis of cosmetic surgery discourse. The results showed that students, turned to symbolic properties, symbolic imitation and pretentious beauty consumption as cultural-social forces instead of material property and financial imitation as well as pretentious material consumption (2011, 63).

Mahdavi and Abbasi in a study "An investigation of tendency to the body management physique control and its effective factors" examined the issue from eight different dimensions. The study results indicated that 1) In all dimensions, the status quo is significantly higher theoretical average 2) Attention attraction, individuation-seeking, influence of friends and peers, diversity-seeking and modernism, sexual intentions, resemblance, showing social class and identity have the highest impact on explaining the dependent variable of tendency to the body management and control, respectively (2008, 131).

Khajavi and Ghanbar (2013) examined social physique anxiety among students. The results showed a significant relationship between social physique anxiety and social phobia. Furthermore, social physique anxiety and social phobia are in direct contact with individuals' self-esteem.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

Before the Enlightenment, the body was regarded as a symbol of "original sin" and needed exaltation through mortification of the body. With the collapse of religious foundations in the West is, not only the body was exonerated from impurities charge, but it became the focus of attention for the formation of new industries to the extent that sociologists such as Turner spoke of the term "humane society" to describe the modern society (Abazari & Hamidi, 2008: 131). Turner maintained that masculine attitude had affected the reproduction of the body (Turner, 2008: 196). According to Foucault, the body is affected by political, social and cultural discourses and this causes the body to act as a mediator in playing powerful role. In this regard, the female body can be easily used as an object to create a balance or gain more power (Foucault, 2009: 172).

In Giddens' approach, self-makeup and the body decoration are not only criterion for ostentation, but also is considered part of an individual's identity. To interact better and reproduce social relations effectively, people need to monitor their faces and body constantly (Giddens, 2006: 86) and the body is a symbol for identity distinction. According to Giddens, the body is affected by people's lifestyles and can display the symbols of class indirectly (ibid: 147). This research is designed and implemented based on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital. Social, cultural, economic, and symbolic capital are types of capital from Bourdieu's view (Jenkins, 2006). In social fields, types of capital including economic, cultural, social capital are used by individuals to enhance their social status. Except this, the importance of the actors is directly determined through the relative value and significance of existing capital (Ritzer, 1998: 724).

Bourdieu emphasizes the concept of "habitus". Habitus, in fact, is mental structures that are shaped since the childhood in terms of class cultural practices and have slight changes in the adulthood. Therefore, individuals' view and evaluations of the body are formed from these habitus during social interactions. Social capital is effective in individuals' assessment of their bodies and others' bodies. Social capital affects the interpersonal relationship in networks and individual access to opportunities, information or material resources, and social situations. Social capital is a kind of sustainable asset that ultimately leads to its expansion. Social capital can also compensate for lack of financial capital or human capital (Bourdieu, 2001: 35). The shape, size, and understanding of the body match social values and all of them can lead to the formation of individual identity. Hence, the function of the body management is the redefinition of individual identity through the acquisition of higher social status. The economic and social capital that person holds will be directly effective in its reproduction (Shilling, 1994: 126). Bourdieu's concept of character is highly practical. In fact, character forms the personal mood causes individuals to adopt different reactions toward different social situations.

Considering the fact that character is the origin of understanding and evaluating the performance of each individual and the social context within actors are nurtured, it can be acknowledged that character is a kind of cultural unconscious (Wacquant & Bourdieu, 2002: 18) and has the ability to form individuals' taste and lifestyle in the micro and macro affairs.

Accordingly, different views in aesthetics can be developing influenced by social character. Regarding the field, Bourdieu believes that it is a social zone that we interact with different abilities and social actors. The aim of these interactions is to earn maximum possible score. The field may vary depending on the situation, such as university, career, business, and media fields. (Fakohi, 2005: 145). According to Bourdieu's theory, the reproduction of the body means a change in physical capital and in the direction of gaining socio-economic and cultural capital that can be assessed in fields such as employment, education, and marriage, but this requires that some criteria for changes in the body lead to gain the predicted capital. In this study, it is attempted to investigate this issue through interviews with women who have performed cosmetic surgery.

### **4. Research Questions**

- What has been the role of the body reproduction in gaining higher social capital for women who had performed cosmetic surgery?
- What has been the role of the body reproduction in gaining higher economic capital for women who had performed cosmetic surgery?

- What has been the role of the body reproduction in gaining higher symbolic capital for women who had performed cosmetic surgery?

## 5. Research Methodology

The present study is a qualitative research its overall strategy was case study and interview was the main data analysis method. The populations in this study were women between 40-18 years old residing in Khorramabad who performed at least one cosmetic surgery. Given that the exact number of cosmetic surgeries did not exist in this city, the method "theoretical saturation" was used. In this method, the sample size depends on the research questions, and when the researcher comes to this conclusion that in a phase of work, concepts and similar responses are found and virtually new concept does not appear (Glaser & Strauss, 1967: 61). Accordingly, with the help of snowball sampling, 25 women were selected for structured interviews. The duration of the interviews was between 2 and 4 hours. In order to analyze the data, thematic analysis method was used. In this method, using data classification and categorization, the concepts and underlying patterns were extracted (Mohammadpour, 2010: 45).

## 6. Research Results

Descriptive statistics indicated that four of the interviewees had Ph.D. degree, 12 had M.A. and B.A. degrees or and 9 had diploma and lower. In terms of employment, 17 people were housewives or unemployed. The measurement of social class and income level also showed that 12 of the respondents related to affluent social class with high-income and 9 people in the middle class. The analysis of the inferential findings of this study with regard to the questions posed and according to the framework methodology used in this study was classified into four general categories: improvement in physical capital, improvement in social capital, improvement in economic capital and improvement in symbolic capital.

### 6.1. Improvement in Physical Capital

Individual self-concept after cosmetic surgery and achieving the expected pre-surgery concept of beauty was assessed with questions related to this issue. It seems that a close relationship exists between this personal self-concept and the general attitude to the concept of beauty. An evaluation of the body even after the surgery is completely dependent on the evaluation that others especially the opposite sex offers to them to the extent that it is even considered as an effective criterion for the evaluation of their surgery.

"When I performed surgery on my nose, my husband did not look at my face for a while; he said you were like a monster. I passed very hard days. I felt that I wasted money so that I became uglier" (Shirin, 32 years old, married, housewife).

"Well, injecting the gel if is not done well, can make human face artificial, particularly I injected gel into my cheeks and my lips at the same time. You know after the injection so many boys follow me. The doctor's work is awesome. All people praise my beauty" (Soraya, 28 years old, single, company secretary). The assessment of the interviews showed that before the surgery, this assessment existed based on the attitude of the opposite sex. However, most women said they had made the final decision on their own or in consultation with their female friends.

"I was the fun of anyone coming for my marriage proposal and they caviled at my fat. Once I went to talk with the boy in the room, he told me I would die if you fall on me, and then started laughing so my mom and dad came in the room angrily. Then, I consulted with my mom and dad. We went to Tehran for gastric bypass surgery" (Parisa, 31 years old, single).

### 6.2. Improvement in Social Capital

Beauty models and following fashion play an important role in the class separation. The initial assessment of the body and its makeup can lead to improve social relationships and form new networks of communication for the individuals. The use of the body in order to achieve more favorable social opportunities, to some extent determines the nature of cosmetic surgeries. Through the body reproduction, individuals feel that they have achieved facilities that the high class of society have. "Since my surgery and the more I care for myself, I have found better friends, go out more and feel happy more and I'm less embarrassed by being among people" (Shiva, 22 years old, student).

"The day I went to the doctor, I met a few high-class people. We are friend for almost two years. I feel pride when walking with them in the street. The rest people look at me with respect and regret" (Maryam, 34 years old, married). "I found my work after being familiar with one of my friends who were accidentally in the bus. My nose became the reason of our friendship, (ha ha ha). When I was on my way to Tehran, the lady was sitting next to me. Suddenly, she asked me where you had performed the surgery for your nose. This simple question create dour friendship so that we are intimate friends for one year" (Tanaz, 28 years old, employed). The above-mentioned interviews suggest that the new network of social relations in favor of high social class is evaluated by the respondents positively and in some cases, it has provided the possibility of promotion for them. To ease loneliness and find the confidence to communicate with high-class people are among other cases mentioned in the interviews.

### **6.3. Improvement in Economic Capital**

The body management in order to obtain better jobs is one of the things that can be attractive for investment. Although capital accumulation is not the result of this cost, a group of women do it to seek better economic position.

"Before this, finding work was hard. It is refreshingly different when you refer to a company in well-dressed form rather than an ugly mien. They sit up and respect me. Whenever I want to change my work, they beg to stay. Well, the face of a secretary is very effective to attract customers; they have the right not to put ugly employees before customers" (Soraya, 28 years old, secretary of a company). Although cosmetic surgery for some women facilitates finding jobs, but it is related to the jobs that are in direct contact with referents. The body reproduction has not played an important role in gaining administrative or managerial positions for the women. "Nothing! Since my surgery, all look at me in a special way as if I have committed a crime. I spent so much money, but my job didn't get better. Now, I stay in my room in order not to face my manager's reproachful glare. After six months, he looks at me as if a thief enter his room. (Soheila, 39 years old, employee).

### **6.4. Improvement in Symbolic Capital**

Symbolic capital, in fact, is the accepted economic capital and social capital, that a person's social status is evaluated through it. Concerning to what extent the body reproduction has led to increase and improve the capital, women in the study had more or less similar responses, which suggests that physical changes could temporarily improve the symbolic capital, but for the person has not achieve this goal permanently. "By wearing pretty clothes and being in luxury places where rich people lived, I felt really good after my surgery, but I soon realized that there was not more than a bubble or a mirage. Especially when I met a man to have a good chance for my marriage, the story was different. Well, when they found that my father was addicted and we have not a good family situation, they became very shocked and very soon our relationship with each other became broken" (Rojan, 23 years old, student).

"Whenever people looked at my appearance and nose, they could not believe that I was from a low-class district in Khorramabad" (Nazar, 25 years old, housewife). "Beauty does not bring money. Maybe, one can find a good and rich husband that is so hard at this time, and period that men look for a rich woman. Her ugliness doesn't matter for them" (Mina, 31 years old, employed).

## **7. Discussion**

Attitude to the concept of the body reproduction among different people in terms of their achievement and motivation of cosmetic surgery is varied, but it seems that Iranian women attempt to benefit from the western beauty standard patterns. During the interviews, famous Hollywood actors were frequently named and the tendency to have their physical similarity was clear. All the interviewees have at least one Iranian or American actress in mind to compare and despite their cosmetic surgery; they were not satisfied with it. Grogan (2008: 350) also reached a similar conclusion in his study so that says women of any age are often dissatisfied with their body condition and wish they were thinner than what they are.

Based on results of this study, it was indicated that improvement in physical capital is a function of others' assessment focused on the male sex, and they have not an independent assessment of cosmetic surgery. In fact, this reflects the fact that most of these people had not certain anomalies to perform surgery. Kelp's (2009) study also shows that only one percent of nose surgeries was the results of abnormal condition, while 25% of the surgery candidates were narcissistic, 12% had dependent personality and 10% had dramatic persona.

Because of this lack of inner satisfaction and independent assessment, the samples were not assured of obtaining a higher physical capital and were looking for the body reproduction in different ways. Gaining social capital among them has made troubles for them with both external and internal affectation. Most of them have stated that the body reproduction is a kind of social pressure that in case of not observing common social values, will punish, or reject individuals. The role of social pressures in tendency to cosmetic surgery has also been confirmed by other researchers (Rezaei et al., 2010; Safiri et al., 2013). Although, almost all of the study interviewees have mentioned that the body change has been a way to raise the social status or earn higher respect or social status, the demand has not been satisfied completely. However, the network of social relationships that people have less access to it has been achieved through the body reproduction. In other words, social acceptance and social relationship network have led to the strength of individuals' social capital, but it could not necessarily lower the social pressures resulted from the expectations of society for the body reproduction or cosmetic follow-up care.

The analysis of the interviews showed that the economic capital of women who have attempted to reproduce the body has not significant change. At the micro level, this creates improvement in attracting them with low wages, but it has not change their economic capital significantly.

The management body method and appearance characteristics among women employed in managerial and non-managerial positions had no significant difference (Rafat-jah & Ghorbani, 2011: 138). Accordingly, the body reproduction has not promoted women's job. Individual merits to obtain a better job are not mixed with physical merits; however, erotic attitude to women has led them to have the impression that sexual beauty can be considered the most important factor for job promotion. Among the women interviewed, symbolic capital can be examined from two perspectives; individual concept and extra-group concept. The individual concept of the women interviewed over the acquisition of symbolic capital is a function of their gained social situations through which they attempt to gain better economic positions. The economic situations can be the result of their marriage or job promotion, while, the extra-group concept is linked to individuals' real social class. Although the body reproduction has provided new social relationships with higher classes for individuals, it is not necessarily a stable social situation and is vanished quickly in a mirage-like form. This, while creating boredom in people, would cause an attempt to reproduce the body.

## **8. Conclusion**

Body as one of the most important factors in creating identity today is faced with too much focus. The changing standards of beauty and development of medical facilities along with direct and indirect advertising for the body reproduction have created a sort of modern-day slavery for women who cannot independently assess their body. Using appearance characteristics to describe girls since their childhood form habitus in their mind that less can pass the appearance criteria. The same habitus in adolescence in individual character form and unwontedly lead women to make changes in their body capital in societies where men's dominance is higher there. If the entry of women into a field is tied to their body assessment, unconsciously the tendency to the physical rearrangement will increase. While individual merits and capabilities are ignored and the physical criteria are emphasized. Women are assessed by society to have better jobs, good social network of relationships, marriage, and social respect. With increasing people who have managed to do this through better social interaction even in their new acquisition form, more women are encouraged to intervene in their body and the early habitus in society will be strengthened in a natural cycle, even if the body reproduction of body does not necessarily lead to an improvement in the individuals' economic or symbolic capital.

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