

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

200 Pounds Beauty is a Korean film that talks about the issue of body image in Korean society. The story revolves around Hanna, the major character, who has issues with her body image that lead her to do plastic surgery to change her look, her body image. In this film, Hanna is described as a talented woman who has a golden voice. She dreams of becoming a famous singer but she does not have the courage to perform on the stage because she is very conscious of her body image; she is fat. Her fatness makes her the target of body shaming from other people. Therefore, instead of singing on the stage, Hanna chooses to be a singer behind the curtain and sings for another singer whose name is Ammy. Further in the film, due to her restlessness, insecurity, and despair, Hanna chooses to imprison herself for one year. During her self-confinement, Hanna does not show herself to the public at all. During this time, she decides to do plastic surgery and transform herself to fit the beauty standard and to be socially accepted. She changes her name to Jenny and takes a career to be a singer. Unfortunately, Hanna is not happy with her role as Jenny. She feels like she loses her real self.

Hanna's issue with her body image is very interesting to discuss because through history, body image is related to the concept of beauty. This concept of

beauty is often standardized in many cultures and may affect the way people see themselves and their self-esteem as in the case of Hanna. Next, *200 Pounds Beauty* is worth analyzing because the setting of the film is South Korea. Typically, the problem of body image is related Western society, especially Western women (Jung & Lee, 2006). Asian women are often seen as having a more positive body image because they are “naturally” thin. However, Jung & Lee find that Korean women also aspire to be thin and actively attach to disciplining the body through diet. Furthermore, this film is important because it portrays the after-effect of plastic surgery, the procedure is often chosen by women to correct their body and improves their view on their body image.

Studies on body image in South Korea have been conducted by some scholars. Jung & Lee (2006) compare the appearance of self-schemata, body Image, self-esteem, and dieting behavior between Korean and U.S. Women. They reveal that Korean women consider appearance as a great important element in society. Therefore, Korean women are having lower self-esteem and are more critical toward their bodies compared to their counterparts in the U.S. Jung & Lee relate the Korean women’s problems on their body image with the cultural concept of South Korea society. Jung & Lee explain that South Korean society is a collective society where the society plays a bigger role in determining the values of everything. Therefore, Korean women are more vulnerable to the society’s judgement about what is good and what is bad. In contrast, American society is an individualistic society where values are set more by individuals. As a result, it is

acceptable for American women to have their individual values that may be different from the values of American people in general.

Some people experience body shaming, so they perceive their body image negatively. It leads them to meet harmful effects. According to Albertson (2011) in her study, there is a girl from Indiana whose name is Angel Green. She was often bullied as “fat and spotted skin” by her friends in school, as a result she committed suicide in front of her friends by hanging herself on the branch of a tree near the bus stop not far from her school (p. 243). Besides that, Nazir (2018) explains that there is a girl from Texas named Brandy Vela, who decided to shoot her chest in her room and shoot her head in front of her parents after being ridiculed as ugly and fat. She experienced cyber – bullying on the internet social media (p. 6). Furthermore, Cook (2015) mentions that there is a girl named Fiona Geraghty from Sommerset, who suffered from a terrible bulimia because she had a dream of having a skinny body, but she failed. Due to her failure of having a skinny body, she ended her life by hanging herself (p. 15).

Another study is done by Kim & Chung (2018) who discuss the side effects of plastic surgery on some Korean women. The negative side effects of plastic surgery found in Kim & Chung’s study, to mention some, are facing the unintended self which consists of “having physical scars”, “suffering from psychological pain”, and “having conflicts in interpersonal relationships” (p. 311). In addition, the women who have done plastic surgery also need to go through a stage called “trying to accept the changed self” that can be in the form of “abandoning expectations”,

“not wanting to change current status”, “trying to forget”, and “attempting to accept oneself” (Kim & Chung, 2018, p. 312).

This study is be different from the previous study because this study will use Korean film as its subject of study. Film and television as well as other forms of media including social media is often considered as a source of body image standardization. The standard body image disseminated by these media can be very harmful to women and may cause physical and mental problems. Other than promoting the so-called ideal body image that can be troublesome for some women, this film talks about the issue of body image experienced by a Korean woman and how the problem solution she chooses results in unwanted side effects.

1.2 Field of the Study

This study is related to the field of gender studies, especially on body image.

1.3 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the problems of body image experienced by a Korean woman named Hanna as shown in *200 Pounds Beauty*, a Korean film.

1.4 Problems Formulation

The problems formulation in this study are:

1. How does Hanna perceive her body image?
2. How do the other characters perceive Hanna’s body image?
3. What are the side effects experienced by Hanna after she underwent plastic surgery to improve her body image?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

Based on the research questions above, the objectives of this study are:

1. To find out the way Hanna perceives her body image
2. To understand the way other characters perceive Hanna's body image.
3. To discover the side effects experienced by Hanna after she underwent plastic surgery to improve her body image.

1.6 Significance of the Study

After conducting this research, the writer expects the result of this study will make people, especially women accept themselves with all their perfection and imperfection. Thus, this film can make people accept themselves and to stop those who are doing body shaming.

1.7 Definition of Term

1. Body Image

The overall sense of someone's appearance related to the importance of knowledge, which is centered on the appearance (Jung & Lee, 2006, p. 351).

2. Korean Society

The society where the women attach the importance of their appearance and reveal lower self - esteem (Jung & Lee, 2006, p. 350).

3. Plastic Surgery

A direct method to reconstruct the body based on detailed perspectives such as youth and femininity (Kim & Chung, 2018, p. 309).

