

## **I. Introduction**

We are living in a modern generation where technology offers us various opportunities to improve ourselves. To be specific, cosmetic surgery allows us to alter our body features perhaps once deemed impossible. This newfound technology becomes a solution for many persons who wish to “improve” themselves to do so.

But who are willing to undergo these operations for the sake of beauty? What do the young Filipinos of today think about cosmetic surgery? In this paper, we try to answer these questions, and we will see that there are different factors involved in determining answers to such questions.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 contains a brief background on cosmetic surgery; then the objectives of this research paper are stated in Section 3. The details of the methodology are then described in Section 4; the results of which are discussed in Section 5.

## **II. Background**

Cosmetic Surgery is a subspecialty of medicine and surgery that uniquely restricts itself to the enhancement of appearance through surgical and medical techniques. It is specifically concerned with maintaining normal appearance, restoring it, or enhancing it beyond the average level toward some aesthetic ideal. Cosmetic Surgery is a multi-disciplinary and comprehensive approach directed to all areas of the head, neck and body.<sup>1</sup> It

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<sup>1</sup> “Definition of Cosmetic Surgery” *American Board of Cosmetic Surgery*, September 15, 2007  
<[www.americanboardcosmeticsurgery.org](http://www.americanboardcosmeticsurgery.org)>

is different from plastic surgery, which is surgery to reconstruct or improve the appearance after injury or illness.<sup>2</sup>

Cosmetic surgery apparently came from plastic surgery. The latter started in the 700's B.C. The Indians were traced to be the first ones to conduct simple surgeries like rhinoplasty – the type of plastic surgery that is used to improve the function (reconstructive surgery) or appearance (cosmetic surgery) of a person's nose. Rhinoplasty is also commonly called a “nose job.”<sup>3</sup>

The real start of cosmetic surgery began in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Obviously, technology is the shoulder of this. The main purpose of this surgery was to repair the faces of the victims of the World War I.

The end of WWI and the high number of shattered faces that were rebuilt by new constructive surgical procedures was put in the press as a way to restore hope amongst soldiers. Surgeons began to realize the capabilities of the reconstructive procedures and began to realize the possibilities. The history of cosmetic surgery has changed a great deal from altering birth deformities to shifting ideas of beauty based on the times.

Once described as a mainly Caucasian surgery reserved for just the rich and famous, the history of cosmetic surgery did not allow the average person to benefit from the procedures that could reshape society's elite. In the history of cosmetic surgery, there was also more of a stigma in speaking openly about any cosmetic work performed. There was also a more mainstreamed idea of beauty in the early history of cosmetic history, with people seeking procedures to a more conformed idea of beauty.<sup>4</sup>

Today, cosmetic surgery has shifted from the early history of cosmetic surgery views. Over time, there have been many additional procedures developed, better techniques formed,

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2 “Cosmetic Surgery” *Health Encyclopedia*, September 15, 2007 <[www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)>

3 “Rhinoplasty” *Wikipedia*, September 15, 2007 <[en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)>

4 “History of Cosmetic Surgery” *eBreastAug*, September 15, 2007 <[www.ebreastaug.com](http://www.ebreastaug.com)>

a wider range of patients, and a higher acceptance and openness than the early history of cosmetic surgery. The idea of beauty has become more diversified, with a greater acceptance for unique and ethnic features and has become a more open forum to discuss than early history of cosmetic surgery.

The shift in views from early history of cosmetic surgery to now has been attributed to many things. The focus on health and fitness has led to a natural progression of wanting to look as good as you feel, and there are more media outlets than in the history of cosmetic surgery. More information and more people are speaking about their cosmetic surgery, which in the history of cosmetic surgery was not done. People today, unlike in the history of cosmetic surgery, are not ashamed that they have gotten surgical work performed on areas there were previously not completely satisfied with.

In 2002 alone, there were close to 6.9 million cosmetic surgery procedures performed, a vast increase of 228% from 1997 which is not a long history of cosmetic surgery but merely five years. When looking at how far the history of cosmetic surgery has extended many people believe the recent increase, awareness, and acceptance has been in part to the limitless amount of information people can access through the Internet. What the history of cosmetic surgery has taught is that becoming as educated and aware of all aspects of aesthetic procedures and better ensure a safe and satisfying surgical experience.

The history of cosmetic surgery is destined to continue to change. With the growing acceptance and openness of cosmetic surgery, it is also essential to remember the history of cosmetic surgery and not lose sight of how it should be used. While cosmetic surgery is an immensely positive experience for many people, studies and history of cosmetic surgery shows that it can be a negative tool if used incorrectly. Patients should have realistic and

informed expectations about cosmetic surgery and understand that over time the history of cosmetic surgery has changed to accept beauty in all types of ethnic and unique ways.<sup>5</sup>

Right now, there are different types of cosmetic surgeries. One of the most mainstream clinics which offer the said procedures is the Belo Medical Group headed by Dr. Victoria G. Belo. Here are some services offered:

1. Blepharoplasty: Laser Eyebag Removal/Eyelift
2. Breast Augmentation/Breast Lift
3. Face Lift
4. Hair Transplant
5. Hydrogel Butt Augmentation
6. Laser Assisted Tumescent Liposuction
7. Lipectomy: Tummy Tuck
8. Rhinoplasty: Noselift/Alar Trimming
9. Stem Cell Auto Grafting (SCAG)<sup>6</sup>

If we look at the modern Filipinos today of age above 25, we could see that most want to achieve that “beauty.” In our paper, we will find out if all people would consider cosmetic surgery as recourse to enhancing oneself and one's sexuality.

### **III. Objectives**

This research paper attempts to answer the questions raised before, that is, who are willing to undergo these operations for the sake of beauty? And what do the young Filipinos of this generation think about cosmetic surgery? Also this paper aims to enumerate the reasons why or factors operating on the decision of why people undergo cosmetic surgery.

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<sup>5</sup> Op. cit. 4

<sup>6</sup> “Services” *Belo Medical Group*, September 15, 2007 <[www.belomed.com](http://www.belomed.com)>

#### **IV. Methodology**

##### Survey

This research has been conducted through the distribution of survey forms among selected respondents. These respondents were 74 randomly selected (read: disregarding gender, social status, religion, etc.) young Filipinos ages 18 to 25. Each respondent was then given the following questions to answer:

1. Have you undergone cosmetic surgery? Yes (to Q2) or No (to Q3)
2. What kind of surgery was it?
3. Would you consider such? Yes(to Q4) or No (why?)
4. Which body part would you consider for a treatment?
5. Do you think undergoing cosmetic surgery will enhance your sexuality?

##### Interview

Pat (real name withheld for privacy reasons), a thirty-seven year old government employee, is one such woman who has undergone cosmetic surgery. She had a nose lift just this summer.

She recounts that she wasn't really planning or saving up for an operation. She was normally dissatisfied about her nose, but only when her American boyfriend based in the States sent her money did she actually consider having one.

She cites that financial constraints are the foremost problem why she never considered cosmetic surgery before. "*Hindi naman kami mayaman, parang artista lang na 'pag may ayaw sa katawan, punta lang kay Vicky Belo,*" she says. So when the opportunity came and that impediment was eliminated, she went for it.

She claims that the surgery had generally benefited her, her looks had improved. She says her boyfriend was happy with the results, and she is happy too that she didn't look like the "probinsyana" she was before.

But Pat has some issues with public acceptance. Some of her family members in Camarines Sur, for example, have renounced her for doing such a thing. She says that people seem to be flabbergasted when they learn of her nose job. She also explains that Filipinos are "too conservative", they tend to look down on people who had modified her looks with the help of surgery.

## **V. Results and Discussions**

The first question in the survey aims to determine the percentage of people who have and have not undergone cosmetic surgery. 3 answered yes and 71 answered no, which is 4.22% of the whole sample. As expected, very few young Filipinos have undergone cosmetic surgery, for reasons we can assume safely to be that they do not have the money needed even if they want to, or that they do not need nor want it yet.

The three respondents who had undergone surgery had the following kinds of operations: laser, stitch, and auxiliary. These procedures have been used by these respondents to correct some form of damage, like reconstructive plastic surgery. They had the operation because they had to, not because they want to change their physical features. In effect, very few young Filipinos have undergone cosmetic surgery because they do not need it at all.

Based on the group's assumption that financial capabilities are the primary impediment for having cosmetic surgery, that factor has been eliminated in the next question. 35.14% of the respondents said "yes" while a bigger percentage of 60.81% said "no" to

undergoing plastic surgery if ever given the chance, disregarding financial constraints and such.

Of those who would agree to have their physical features altered, a big percentage of the respondents responded that they would like to have a slimmer body by removing fats (especially in the tummy area) removed. This is more than those that wanted their cheeks, butts, wrinkles, skin or nose changed.

On the other hand, those who preferred their bodies “natural” claimed that they are “already contented” with what they have. Some other people regard physical beauty as only something superficial and that it’s way too much to bother about it for undergoing such procedures. Other reasons for not undergoing one would be the pain that they have to feel, the cost of operations, and the fear for public disapproval.

From these reasons, we can actually deduce that the society in which we have grown up in plays a large role. And our society being as intertwined with religion as it is, give us more factors to consider. The Catholic Church has instilled in our minds to remain natural. Filipino values include “If you were blessed with a beautiful face, then be thankful, otherwise, accept what you have.” That we think is why most of our respondents would still not want to undergo cosmetic surgery given the chance.

Another thing is that our culture is very conservative; people will tend to think differently of a person after such operations. Take celebrities for example, snide remarks like “*eh kasi retokada*” directed to those who underwent cosmetic surgeries are common.

The mainstream media are also of the essence. The celebrities with perfect skin, faces and bodies set the standards of acceptable beauty and sexuality, so people look up to them in telling whether a person is “beautiful” or not.

We have then pinned down the reason why we get such results from our surveys. These reasons should be without a doubt our culture, which is actually very dependent on our

dominant religion. Although standards of beauty are set by the society, it is also the society which prevents most Filipinos from undergoing cosmetic surgery.

And the results for question 6 verify this result, 30 respondents believed that cosmetic surgery improves sexuality while 45 respondents believed otherwise. We have a very confident community indeed.

## **VI. Conclusion**

From the results of our survey, we have achieved our objectives for conducting this research. We have learned that only few people would want to undergo cosmetic surgery for the sake of beauty. In fact, they are already contented with their features and consider themselves good-looking already. We have also learned that most young Filipinos think that cosmetic surgery would not improve their sexuality. And lastly, we have learned that people undergo cosmetic surgeries because they have to, not because they want to (there are exceptions here). Similarly, people do not undergo cosmetic surgery because of two very crucial factors here, which are culture and religion.

The status quo plays a central role in setting people's standards of beauty and sexuality, therefore outlets such as mass media are essential to building up the norms that Filipino people live by. But then these standards are very unstable indeed, trends come and go. The epitome of beauty a decade ago is not the same as what is "in" now.



## **VII. Recommendations**

From these results, we can pretty much say that the people under the industry of cosmetic surgery should do something to change how the Filipino youth think, or else they would get very little clients.

To other researchers, this research paper may be improved by taking into considerations the other age brackets of the Filipino community. Upon doing so, we will see how the Filipino community, in general, think about cosmetic surgery.

It would also be helpful to do extensive chronological research spanning a few years before to recognize how the overall taste of the Filipinos vary over time and what socio-economic/cultural factors may be involved.

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