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Death by Headline: A Critical Analysis of Media Ethics in the Case
of Lee Sun Kyun

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Abstract

Prominent scandals like the Lee Sun Kyun case highlight complex dynamics between media sensationalism, societal norms, and individual rights. This study examines ethical distortions in textual and visual reporting on celebrities in South Korea and the violation of ethical guidelines in news articles. Through a qualitative content analysis of 57 articles from MBC News, KBS News, and TV Chosun News, the study reveals invasive reporting, sensationalist headlines, and biased descriptions of sensitive topics like suicide. The findings underscore the need to strengthen journalistic standards and balance individual rights with public interest in media reporting.

Abstract

Prominente Skandale, wie der Fall von Lee Sun Kyun, beleuchten komplexe Dynamiken zwischen Mediensensationen, gesellschaftlichen Normen und individuellen Rechten. Diese Studie untersucht ethische Verzerrungen in der textlichen und visuellen Berichterstattung über Prominente in Südkorea sowie die Verletzung ethischer Richtlinien in Nachrichtenartikeln. Anhand einer qualitativen Inhaltsanalyse von 57 Artikeln von MBC News, KBS News und TV Chosun News zeigt die Studie invasive Berichterstattung, sensationsheischende Schlagzeilen und tendenziöse Beschreibungen sensibler Themen wie Suizid auf. Die Ergebnisse unterstreichen die Notwendigkeit, journalistische Standards zu stärken und das Gleichgewicht zwischen individuellen Rechten und öffentlichem Interesse in der Medienberichterstattung zu wahren.

Preface

The genesis of this study emerged from a profound observation of the evolving landscape of journalism, particularly within the realm of celebrity reporting in South Korea. As a media enthusiast and an advocate for ethical journalism, I found myself increasingly intrigued by the intersection of media ethics, digital media, and the portrayal of sensitive events, such as celebrity scandals.

The choice to delve into the Lee Sun Kyun scandal was not arbitrary but rather a deliberate decision rooted in the significance of the case within South Korean entertainment and its broader implications on journalistic practices. Lee Sun Kyun's journey from international acclaim to entanglement in a scandal that ultimately led to his tragic demise sparked widespread media coverage and public discourse. It encapsulated the intricate balance between media sensationalism, public interest, and individual rights, prompting critical questions about the ethical dimensions of reporting in the digital age.

During the process of conducting this analysis, I found myself grappling with the ethical dilemmas inherent in dissecting media coverage. It was a journey marked by introspection and an unwavering commitment to scrutinize journalistic practices with a discerning eye.

As I delved into the research questions, meticulously examining language patterns, visual elements, and ethical frameworks, I was confronted with the complexities of media representation and the power dynamics at play. Each sub-research question unearthed layers of ethical considerations, inviting reflection on the ethical responsibilities of media practitioners and the implications of their choices on society at large. My personal experience throughout this analysis was one of enlightenment and introspection. It underscored the importance of critical inquiry and ethical reflexivity in navigating the intricacies of media portrayal. By embarking on this journey, I hope to contribute to a nuanced understanding of media ethics in the digital age and foster dialogue on responsible and ethical journalism in South Korea.

In presenting this study, I invite readers to join me in this exploration of media ethics, acknowledging the complexities and challenges inherent in the ever-evolving landscape of journalism. May this research serve as a catalyst for continued discourse and ethical introspection within the realm of media representation and reporting.

Acknowledgement

Completing this master's thesis has been a journey filled with personal growth and invaluable living moments, which would not have happened without the people who accompanied me on this journey.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

The rise of digital media has transformed journalism, presenting both challenges and opportunities, especially concerning the ethical complexities of reporting sensitive events like celebrity scandals. The scandal involving Lee Sun Kyun exemplifies these dilemmas, underscoring the balance between media sensationalism, public interest, and individual rights. Despite the significant influence of media coverage, there is a lack of comprehensive research on the ethical dimensions of South Korean online reporting on celebrity scandals.

This research prioritizes South Korean journalistic ethics codes as the principal conceptual framework, while also integrating framing theory—specifically visual framing—to underscore the media's role as gatekeepers in collecting, selecting, organizing, and presenting ideas, events, and topics. Ethical theories are employed to discuss the findings, specifically addressing the ethical breaches in journalistic practices related to the Lee Sun Kyun scandal, focusing on ethical reasoning rather than psychological motivations, and assessing unethical practices through teleological, deontological ethics, and virtue ethics lenses. Additionally, the Primary Effect theory and Attentional Capture are utilized to explicate why sensational, exaggerated titles can constitute ethical violations in terms of their impact on receivers.

1.1. Research focus

The primary aim of this master's thesis is to conduct a meticulous analysis of South Korean online media's portrayal of Lee Sun Kyun's scandal, with a specific focus on identifying and evaluating any unethical media practices in the news articles. This includes examining text elements such as words, sentences, and paragraphs, as well as visual elements such as photography and videos. However, it's important to note a limitation regarding videos: only scenes potentially violating the given ethic code are screenshotted and analyzed, rather than analyzing the entire video. This is because the research material consists of online articles rather than videos or TV news. Only some of the selected articles include videos within them, and in such cases, only screenshots are taken for analysis. Through a systematic examination of news articles disseminated by three prominent national online news platforms, the study seeks to elucidate journalistic practices, particularly the language patterns and visual elements employed in framing and

reporting on the scandal. By shedding light on the ethical lapses and shortcomings in media coverage, the research endeavors to contribute to a nuanced understanding of media ethics in the digital age and to inform future discourse on responsible and ethical journalism in South Korea.

Lee Sun Kyun:

Given the nature of this study as a case analysis, it is imperative to provide contextual background information regarding Lee Sun Kyun, elucidating his significance within the realm of South Korean entertainment, as well as the specific news events that have been reported concerning him. Lee Sun-kyun (Korean: 이선균; March 2, 1975 – December 27, 2023) was a South Korean actor, internationally acclaimed for his role in Bong Joon-Ho's Academy Award-winning film *Parasite* (2019), for which he received accolades such as the Screen Actors Guild Award, among others. (Lui, 2024) In October 2023, Lee Sun Kyun became embroiled in a scandal following an article announcing an investigation into suspected drug use. It is noteworthy that drug usage is strictly forbidden in South Korea, with medical marijuana being available only with a doctor's prescription for a few select diseases, while recreational use is forbidden (Statista research department, 2023).

To provide an overview of the scandal, according to Incheon Metropolitan Police Agency, actor Lee Sun Kyun faced charges of cannabis and psychoactive drug use, leading to a travel ban and voluntary withdrawal from a drama series. (Jae-Yeon, 2023) During the mid-term of the scandal, Lee requested a lie detector test to counter the accusations, citing lack of physical evidence and alleging deception by a hostess. The complaint is that it is unfair to be accused of drug use in a situation where there is only a statement and no physical evidence. (Moon, 2023) Due to his public persona and societal expectations, the scandal received extensive media coverage. Tragically, the scandal concluded with Lee's death on December 27, 2023, in a suspected suicide. (G.S, 2023) His demise underscored the intense pressure within South Korea's entertainment industry. Subsequently, a woman was arrested for alleged blackmail against him. (Sophie-Ha, 2024)

1.2. Research Statement

The literature review conducted for this study draws upon insights from both South Korean experts and international studies. It highlights the need for further exploration and identifies several significant research gaps in media ethics and journalism practices in South Korea, particularly in reporting on celebrity scandals. These gaps encompass various aspects, including the examination of journalistic practices in celebrity reporting, understanding media manipulation and distorted reporting, content analysis of journalistic ethics standards, and the absence of academic inquiry into specific celebrity scandals. In the following sections, reviewed literature and the resulting research gaps are explained.

Research Gap 1: Limited Examination of South Korean Media Ethics in Celebrity Reporting.

Existing research has primarily focused on media consumers' responses to celebrity transgressions, neglecting to systematically analyze journalistic ethics violations in news articles. Studies like those by Kang and Park (2021), Zulfie et al. (2023), and Park and Kim (2021) have emphasized public perception but have not thoroughly investigated journalistic practices. Thus, there is a need for further research to explore the ethical dimensions of news reporting in South Korea from the perspective of media producers.

Research Gap 2: Limited Understanding of Media Manipulation and Distorted Reporting.

While some studies have touched upon media manipulation and its impact, comprehensive research on the extent and implications of distorted reporting in South Korean media, particularly concerning celebrity scandals, is lacking. Carpenter and Moon (2021) and Akbar et al. (2021) provide partial insights into this area but do not offer a comprehensive understanding. Therefore, further investigation is required to uncover existing news articles, examine the motives behind distorted reporting, and assess its implications for public perception.

Research Gap 3: Need for Content Examining Studies on Journalistic Ethics Standards:

Despite studies like Logan et al. (2010) examining the ethical dimensions of specific scandals, there is a dearth of systematic analyses of journalistic ethics standards and practices in South Korea. More comprehensive studies are needed to understand the landscape of journalistic ethics standards and their application in the South Korean context.

Research Gap 4: Absence of Academic Inquiry into Specific Celebrity Scandals.

While general discussions on media ethics and celebrity reporting exist, there is a lack of academic scrutiny into specific celebrity scandals in South Korea. Case studies analyzing the ethical dimensions of high-profile scandals, such as that of Lee Sun Kyun, are notably absent from the literature. Therefore, there is a need for academic inquiry into specific celebrity scandals to enhance our understanding of media ethics in South Korea.

1.3. Research Questions

Considering the research gaps, this study developed its research questions aimed at expanding the examination of South Korean Media Ethics in Celebrity Reporting. Specifically, it focuses on studying the active case of Lee Sun Kyun to deepen the understanding of distorted reporting by examining detailed elements through content examining studies on journalistic ethics standards.

Research Question (RQ1)

“To what extent do specific language patterns in South Korean online media coverage of the Lee Sun Kyun scandal contribute to ethical distortions?”

Sub-Research Questions:

RQ 1.1. To what extent can specific language patterns in South Korean online media coverage of the Lee Sun Kyun scandal **invade personal privacy?**

RQ 1.2. To what extent do language choices and patterns in the coverage of the Lee Sun Kyun scandal contribute to **sensationalism**?

RQ 1.3. To what extent does language in the coverage of the Lee Sun Kyun scandal reflect or create **bias**?

RQ 1.4. How is **the topic of suicide** addressed in the coverage of the Lee Sun Kyun scandal, and what ethical concerns arise from these reporting practices?

Research Question (RQ2)

“How do visual elements in news reporting, such as images, graphic designs, and videos, potentially violate ethical standards in the coverage of the scandal of Lee Sun Kyun?”

Sub-Research Questions:

2.1. In what ways do visual elements in news reporting infringe upon **personal privacy boundaries** in the coverage of the Lee Sun Kyun scandal?

2.2. How do visual elements contribute to **sensationalism** in the coverage of the Lee Sun Kyun scandal, and what ethical implications arise from these practices?

Chapter 2. Key Concepts

In this chapter, several key concepts crucial to understanding the scope and framework of this research will be clarified. These concepts provide the foundation for analyzing the ethical dimensions of South Korean online media's coverage of celebrity scandals, particularly the case of Lee Sun Kyun.

2.1. Media ethics

Media ethics is the branch of functional ethics, which uses the insight of meta-ethics and general principles or rules of normative ethics in solving its puzzling ethical or moral problems in their daily works of reporting and writing. Media ethics or journalism ethics are the moral principles, reflected in rules, written or unwritten, which prescribe how media personnel should work to avoid harming or causing pain and suffering or distressing others, for example when gathering information; when deciding what to publish; when responding to complaints about their work. (Aasha, 2022) According to Fidalgo et al. (2022), journalistic codes of ethics are traditionally regarded as declarations that journalists will try to follow the best professional practices and ethical standards, meet their social responsibility obligations, and accept public accountability. Their commitment to do so on a self-regulatory basis helps to protect news media from political interference and, thus, to preserve freedom, independence, and pluralism.

2.2. Public interest and Public figure

Not only in this study, but in general, journalistic ethics codes emphasize the role of public interest in defining an ethical violation. In this context, the concept of a public figure is also closely connected to the confrontation between social responsibility and privacy. Therefore, it is essential to define what public interest and public figure mean in the context of journalistic ethics. According to Article 16, the definition of public interest as cited in the South Korean Newspaper Code of Ethics includes the following considerations (Korea Press Ethics Commission):

1. **National Security, etc.:** When it is unavoidable to ensure national security, maintain social order, and public welfare.
2. **Public Safety:** Cases that are inevitable for the preservation of public health, safety, and the environment.

3. **Exposure of Crime:** When necessary to prevent antisocial crimes or significant unethical acts.
4. **Prevention of Misleading the Public:** When necessary to prevent the public from being misled by the assertions or actions of individuals or groups.

2.3. Scandal and Sensationalism

The internet era has significantly contributed to the dynamic development of journalism, impacting at least two essential areas: the presentation of journalistic products and the behavior of journalists. The internet has given rise to new media platforms, such as online media, and has made information dissemination faster and more extensive. It also affects journalists' behavior in the field, influencing how they search for, process, and disseminate information. The Journalistic Code of Ethics is often seen as addressing only the ethical aspects of conventional journalism practices, failing to cover online journalism adequately. This gap has led to numerous violations of journalistic ethics in online media (Lestari, 2019b), one of which is sensationalism. As proposed by Udeze & Uzuegbunam (2013), sensationalism can be defined as the media's adoption of unethical practices, epitomized by the press's perceived irresponsibility under the libertarian philosophy, now labeled "market-driven journalism." This trend prioritizes trivial news, flashy layouts, and lurid photos to captivate mass audiences, while diminishing informative content. In this study, specifically obtaining sensations through reporting on celebrity scandals is a key concept for understanding the resulting ethical violations.

Hanukov (2015) argues that contemporary media's focus on celebrity scandals, driven by digital technologies and competition, prioritizes entertainment over informing the public. This media environment accelerates the creation and consumption of information, requiring quick responses from public figures. Scandals follow a predictable pattern designed to provoke strong audience reactions and maximize financial gains. Celebrities, as role models, are more easily judged when distanced from the audience's self-likeness, especially during scandals, which destabilize their public image and spark public and critical discussions about identity, achievement, and morals.

Chapter 3. Theoretical Frameworks

This study employs key theoretical frameworks from media studies and ethics to analyze the media coverage of Lee Sun Kyun's scandal and associated ethical considerations. These frameworks include Framing Theory, Sensational News Covering, Ethical Theories in Journalism, and Ethic Codes. Each framework offers unique insights into language patterns, visual elements, and journalistic practices, facilitating a comprehensive examination of potential ethical distortions in media representation. Integrating these perspectives enables a nuanced understanding of media ethics and their implications in contemporary journalism.

3.1. Framing theory

The basis of framing theory is that the media focuses attention on certain events and then places them within a field of meaning (Mass Communication Theory (Online), 2017, as cited in Arowolo, 2017). Framing principle indicates that how something is provided to the audience (called “the frame”) impacts the alternatives human beings make approximately a way to method that information. (Framing Theory, 2014) According to Arowolo (2017), the most common use of frames is in terms of the frame the news or media place on the information they convey, (op cit).

Even though this study focuses on identifying ethical violations in news articles rather than public perception of them, framing theory is profoundly relevant to the research questions. Framing shapes how ethical violations are perceived and understood. By studying framing, we can identify ethical mishandlings in news articles. For instance, framing theory applies to RQ1 (Language Patterns) by analyzing how the media's choice of words and narratives frames the scandal.

In this study, to discern framing in news coverage, we adopted the framework proposed by Entman (1991) as cited in Arowolo (2017). Entman identifies five prevalent ways to frame news stories: conflict, human interest/personalization, consequence, morality, and responsibility. The concept of framing entails "drawing attention to certain attributes of the objects of news coverage, as well as to the objects themselves" (Entman, 1991, as cited in Arowolo, 2017). Frames can be understood as organizing ideas or themes, serving as mechanisms for linking stories historically and constructing narratives over time and across political spaces (Arowolo,

2017). The creation of frames within stories is often a deliberate choice made by sources, reporters, journalists, and/or editors. This underscores the role of the media as gatekeepers who consciously collect, select, organize, and present the ideas, events, and topics they cover (Mass Communication Theory, 2017, as cited in Arowolo, 2017). This theoretical background informs not only the analysis of how information is framed but also the selection of materials for study. For instance, it sheds light on why specific elements such as titles and initial sentences of news articles are chosen as study material. Moreover, this framework directly work on both RQ1 and 2, which explore ethical violations in journalistic practices.

Visual Framing

The concept of 'framing' in mass communication dates back to the 1950s, originating from Gregory Bateson's essay, "A Theory of Play and Fantasy," where he discussed how the meaning of communication is shaped by its context and construction (Vliegthart, 2012, as cited in Parveen & Showkat, 2020). According to Parveen & Showkat (2020), pictures and images are crucial context-shaping elements in news articles. Despite the evolving media environment, the significance of images in news remains unparalleled.

Susan Sontag (2003, as cited in Parveen & Showkat, 2020) stated that pictures ideally serve as an "invitation to pay attention." Images are significant because they transcend linguistic and geographical barriers (Popp and Mendelson, 2010). Photographs, in particular, can directly portray reality (Joffe, 2008).

Bucher & Schumacher (2006) suggest that visuals are more easily understood, retained, and retrieved from memory compared to text. Gibson & Zillmann (2000) argue that visual information heavily influences one's impressions and judgments due to its greater impact on the mind compared to textual information.

These perspectives highlight the importance and relevance of examining visual elements in news articles, not just textual ones. Research Question 2 (Analysis 2) centers on this examination, focusing on specific visual elements such as images, graphic design, and video materials for potential ethical concerns. Extracting and examining visual elements in news articles, including their edited graphic designs, helps to understand their context fully and to assess whether journalists use contextually appropriate visualizations. This analysis can reveal

ethically questionable contexts delivered through images. The idea is based on the approach that images make news articles communicate meaning immediately. As Mirzoeff (1999) states, "It imposes meaning at one stroke without the need to analyze it." Images evoke and stimulate emotional responses from viewers. Perlmutter's (1998) typology highlights that "manifest content is thought to foster an emotional connection between the viewer and what is viewed."

3.2. Sensational News covering

The research questions focus on the presence of sensationalism in both textual and visual elements within online articles. Therefore, it's crucial to clarify why sensationalism is viewed as an ethical distortion in journalistic practices and, furthermore, what precisely constitutes sensational news coverage. Hence, theories delineating the features of sensationalism are pertinent for identifying sensationalized information within the articles.

As Arbaoui et al. (2016) noted, early research on sensationalism in news coverage tended to define sensationalism by dichotomously distinguishing between "proper" and entertaining or attention-grabbing news topics. Hendriks Vettehen, Nuijten, and Beentjes (2005, as cited in Arbaoui et al., 2016) refer to the latter category as "basic needs content," following the perspective of psychologists like Davis and McLeod (2003). Davis and McLeod (2003) explain the power of these topics to attract attention from an evolutionary standpoint. Topics such as sex, violence, scandals, and disasters are argued to serve an adaptive function in the Environment of Evolutionary Adaptedness, drawing attention due to their relevance to safety and reproduction (Davis & McLeod, 2003, p. 209, as cited in Arbaoui et al., 2016). Other scholars suggest that sensationalism is not limited to specific news topics but can be based on various content characteristics known to emotionally arouse audiences by engaging their biological sensory system, as noted by Arbaoui et al. (2016), citing Grabe, Zhou, & Barnett (2001) and Hendriks Vettehen, Beentjes, Nuijten, & Peeters (2011). Kleemans, van Cauwenberge, d'Haenens, and Hendriks Vettehen (2008), cited in Arbaoui et al. (2016), argue that sensationalist topics receive significant attention across various outlets, making it challenging to differentiate between them clearly. Therefore, further differentiation between other aspects of sensationalism is necessary.

Following the literature, Arbaoui et al. (2016) conceptualized sensationalism as the characteristics of news that emotionally arouse audiences. They distinguished three categories of sensationalism. The first one is the topic. For instance, content material approximately subjects inclusive of violence and intercourse are commonly sensational issues. This approach is directly applicable to our study, especially in explaining why the titles of the news articles and the repetitiveness of the news on the scandal itself are extracted and analyzed under the main category of sensationalism.

The second category, as outlined by Arbaoui et al. (2016), pertains to the storytelling perspective. In contrast to abstract information, the use of human exemplars providing concrete and/or emotional testimonies is considered salient in news stories. Personalized exemplification significantly influences viewers' processing of the news (Bas & Grabe, 2015; Lefevere, De Swert, & Walgrave, 2012). This approach also applies to our categorization, particularly in the selection of textual and visual elements from research materials, which led to the creation of a subcategory called "emotionalizing." As noted by Arbaoui et al. (2016), ordinary people often appear in news as actors commenting on a story, either as passersby or eyewitnesses, to personalize and dramatize news (Bek, 2010; Wang, 2012). For a connection with sensationalism, these human exemplars would ideally share personalized stories. Based on this theoretical approach, our study's categorization led to the creation of a subcategory termed "Emotionalizing" within the broader category of "Sensationalism." This subcategory entailed extracting personalized, dramatized language and visual patterns from online news articles, along with reporting on other people's reactions to the dramatic events involving the actor Lee Sun Kyun.

The third category of sensationalism involves the use of specific audio-visual features, often referred to as "formal features." These features, such as music and specific camera techniques, capture the audience's attention by directly impacting the human sensory system (Grabe, Lang, & Zhao, 2003; Hendriks Vettehen, Nuijten, & Beentjes, 2005). Examples of these sensational features include a fast editing pace, an eyewitness camera perspective, zoom-in camera lens movements, reenactment of news events, and the use of music and voice-over narration (Wang, 2012, as cited in Arbaoui et al., 2016). To apply this approach in the study, images attached to news articles, as well as graphic design, editing styles, and the selection of photographs or video scenes, were chosen as study materials within the category of "Sensationalism."

3.3. Theoretical approaches applied to the research material

“Primary effect theory”

Reis et al. (2015) found a significant correlation between the sentiment polarity of news headlines and their popularity, as well as the engagement dynamics of the accompanying comments. By analyzing features extracted from the text of news headlines, the study revealed that headlines with certain sentiment tendencies tend to attract more clicks and generate more discussion among readers. This suggests that understanding and leveraging the sentiment of headlines could be a valuable strategy for increasing user engagement and click-through rates on online news platforms. In other words, it explains the selection of titles from news articles for analyzing the specific language patterns of a news article, with the aim of capturing attention, essentially focusing on sensationalism.

“Attentional capture”

Consistent with the findings of Brady et al. (2020), which reveal the prioritized attention given to moral and emotional content over neutral material in early visual processing, it's important to note that the observed variance in attentional capture isn't solely driven by differences in arousal levels. This theoretical approach can be effectively applied to extract emotion-expressing words, emotional visualizations, and reports on individuals' reactions or emotional states from selected news articles, enabling their analysis. This application aligns well with journalistic ethics codes, such as Article 3, Reporting Rules, Point 6 of the South Korean Practical Guidelines for Journalistic Ethics (2021). These guidelines likely underscore the significance of ethical reporting practices, including considerations for how attention-seeking behaviors may impact journalistic integrity and responsibility. Therefore, by incorporating this theoretical framework, journalists can navigate the ethical complexities associated with reporting on emotional content in a responsible manner.

3.4. Ethical Theories Applied to Ethical Violations in Journalism

In this research, ethical theories are applied to analyze the ethical violations in journalistic practices related to the Lee Sun Kyun scandal. This approach focuses on ethical

reasoning rather than psychological motivations, assessing unethical practices through the lens of teleological, deontological ethics and virtue ethics.

3.4.1. Teleological approach:

Journalistic practices guided by a teleological approach prioritize outcomes, considering whether the coverage benefits society and contributes to happiness (Mubarok, 2017, as cited by Akbar et al., 2021). For example, journalists may prioritize reporting news stories that benefit society while avoiding those that could cause harm. This approach requires journalists to maintain objectivity and present fair, unbiased news, focusing on both the process and the outcomes. Balancing process and result is essential to ensure quality reporting and meaningful impact (Arum, 2018; as cited in Akbar et al., 2021).

Ethical Violations Explained by the Teleological Approach:

- Reporting on a drug allegation scandal using leaked information from police investigators.
- Publishing private phone call records aimed at sensationalism, even though they lack necessary information.
- Reporting on suicide with detailed information and emotional content.

These examples highlight how prioritizing outcomes can lead to ethical violations in journalistic practices.

3.4.2. Deontological Approach

Deontological Theory, often associated with Immanuel Kant, emphasizes duty and adherence to principles or moral values, regardless of the consequences. Known for its absolutist stance, it asserts that certain actions, like lying to obtain information, are never justified. However, conflicts can arise between moral duties, such as protecting a source's identity in court, leading to dilemmas when equally good rules conflict (Hadzialic, 2019).

Ethical Violations Explained by the Deontological Approach:

- Interviewing family members regarding the drug allegation scandal: This violates the duty to respect privacy and avoid causing unnecessary distress.
- Uninvited journalists visiting the agency and funeral: This breaches the duty to respect personal boundaries and the dignity of individuals during sensitive times.

3.4.3. Virtue ethical approach

The virtue of justice plays a crucial role in guiding ethical decisions in journalism, offering clarity where other moral theories or traditional ethical codes may fall short. Aristotle regarded justice as the complete moral virtue, a governing agent-neutral virtue that applies equally to all, without special consideration for individuals or specific groups. Plato and Aristotle viewed justice as encompassing all aspects of morality, including social and particular justice. According to Dahl (1991, as cited by Quinn, 2007), justice involves treating individuals based on what they deserve, determined by a system of merit. For instance, law-abiding citizens deserve full citizenship rights because of their lawful behavior (Quinn, 2007).

Ethical Dilemmas Explained by the Virtue of Justice:

1. Interviewing Lee Sun Kyun before and after a police investigation:

- **Duty of Journalism:** Informing the public about the actions of a public figure.
- **Ethical Concerns:** Violating privacy and human rights by publicizing judicial issues.

2. Reporting on Suicide with Detailed Information and Emotion:

- **Ethical Concern:** Such reporting can invade privacy and sensationalize tragedy, causing harm to individuals and society.

Justice as a virtue requires balancing the duty to inform the public with the need to respect individual privacy and dignity.

3.5. Conceptual Framework for Analyzing Ethical Mishandlings

The conceptual framework for analyzing ethical mishandlings in this study is designed to systematically assess adherence to journalistic ethics codes. Codes of ethics are one of the most widespread instruments of (self-)regulation for journalistic activity, pointing out the best professional practices and ethical standards to be followed and emphasizing the need for scrutiny by the public. Such codes have different names, scopes, authorships, ranges of action, and enforcement capacities (Fidalgo et al., 2022). Therefore, this framework is crucial for understanding the ethical dimensions of news reporting, particularly within the context of South Korean journalism. However, global ethical codes, such as those from the International Organization of Journalists (IOJ) presented at the Collective Consultations on Codes of Ethics

for the Mass Media organized by UNESCO in Paris, 1973, and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ): The IFJ Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists adopted at the 30th IFJ World Congress in Tunis, 2019, were essential for highlighting specific and unique aspects of South Korean journalistic ethics codes through comparison.

This approach is based on the study by Wilkins et al. (2004), where they analyzed ethics codes as professional statements of what constitutes good work, linking them to theories of culture and history. They posit that ethical codes reflect the ongoing professional struggles over core values that shape journalism. Through a cultural materialist perspective, culture is seen as a dynamic, historically shaped process, influencing language and practices. Ethics codes are regarded as cultural practices within this evolving social process, representing explicit forms of practical communication in specific societal contexts. Analyzing these codes involves considering their historical context, addressed issues, and language usage. Furthermore, insights into broader journalism ethics issues can be gained by examining what is omitted from these codes. Ultimately, ethics codes articulate historically specific relationships, shedding light on contemporary journalism conditions and the media-society dynamic. However, Williams suggests that formalizing journalistic duties through ethics codes may inadvertently obscure the very relationships they seek to clarify.

Hence, prioritizing South Korean journalistic ethics codes as the primary conceptual framework was crucial. The Korea Press Ethics Commission emphasizes the importance of adhering to the Newspaper Ethics Practice Guidelines to effectively implement the Code of Newspaper Ethics adopted by key journalistic associations in South Korea, including the Korea Newspaper Association, the Korea Newspaper Broadcasting Editors Association, and the Korea Journalists Association. Journalists commit to following these guidelines, which are upheld as the standards of the Korea Newspaper Ethics Committee. Primary Ethical Codes in South Korea include:

1. "언론자율규정" (Journalistic Code of Ethics): Published by the Korea Press Foundation in 2016.
2. "신문윤리강령" (Journalistic (Press) Code of Ethics): Issued by the Korea Press Ethics Commission.

3. "신문윤리실천요강" (Practical Guidelines for Journalistic Ethics): Also provided by the Korea Press Ethics Commission.

Furthermore, the Korea Newspaper Association, the Korea Association of Newspapers and Broadcasting Editors, and the Korea Journalists Association have endorsed and established the revised Newspaper Code of Ethics and Practice Guidelines. Initially introduced on April 7, 1957, these guidelines have undergone a complete revision once in 1996 and partial revisions in 2009, 2016, and 2021.

Chapter 4. Methodology

4.1. Method of research

For this research, "Qualitative Content Analysis" was used as the primary research method. According to Pfeiffer (2018), qualitative content analysis is employed for the systematic processing of material, such as texts, to answer the research question of a scientific study. It is a part of empirical research and helps to gain new insights. This method can analyze not only texts but also music or images, making it particularly effective for examining how a certain topic is reported in a medium at a given time. Given these characteristics, qualitative content analysis is the most suitable method for this research, which aims to investigate ethical misrepresentations in online news regarding a drug scandal involving the actor Lee Sun Kyun. To thoroughly examine these articles, we will analyze texts, accompanying photos, and other visual elements.

As Mayring (2000) explains, "Qualitative content analysis defines itself within this framework as an approach of empirical, methodologically controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytical rules and step-by-step models, without premature quantification." This approach ensures a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the material.

Building on this foundation, data collection has been conducted using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling refers to a group of non-probability sampling techniques where units are selected because they possess the characteristics needed for the sample. In other words, according to Nikolopoulou, (2022) units are selected "on purpose" in purposive sampling. Also known as judgmental sampling, this method relies on the researcher's judgment to identify and select individuals, cases, or events that can provide the most valuable information to achieve the study's objectives.

By combining qualitative content analysis with purposive sampling, this research methodically addresses the intricate ethical issues presented in the news coverage of the Lee Sun Kyun scandal. This approach not only allows for a detailed examination of the content but also ensures that the selected samples are highly relevant and informative for the study's objectives.

4.2. Data collection

This qualitative content analysis was conducted on a total of 57 online articles obtained from 3 distinct online media outlets. This dataset was collected by two main processes. First, the selection of news sources. Subsequently, selection of news articles from these chosen sources. Each of these data collection processes consists of several steps and considers key criteria for data collection, including validity, reliability, relevance, representativeness, accessibility, and authenticity.

4.2.1. The selection of news sources

The primary criterion for selecting news sources (MBC, KBS, and TV Chosun) for the dataset was the location of the media outlet. Given the research topic and its related phenomena, as well as the examination method involving ethical codes, the location of the news article producer played an essential role. Therefore, the initial selection criterion mandated that the research material should consist of Korean articles from Korean media outlets discussing a Korean actor within the context of Korean ethical norms for the Korean public. Despite the coverage of the same scandal and process by global news agencies, their reports were deemed irrelevant to the research interests and questions.

The second criterion for selection involved building upon previous studies, essentially utilizing existing material as a foundation. The choice of research materials, particularly media outlets like KBS News and TV Chosun, was influenced by a directive from the South Korean Newspaper Ethics Committee. According to Kim Sung Jae (2024), a total of 47 online articles from the aforementioned media outlets were flagged for violations of the Newspaper Code of Ethics and the Newspaper Ethics Practice Guide in relation to the Lee Sun Kyun case. These violations included the disclosure of suicide notes, private phone conversations, and reporting on suicide methods. Notably, some of the flagged articles received a "warning" for verbatim disclosure of a suicide note, initially reported by TV Chosun in the form of a memo, accompanied by tags such as "exclusive" or "scoop". In accordance with this directive, our research intentionally included articles that had previously violated ethical standards, with the aim of conducting a more comprehensive examination of these ethical lapses.

The third criterion for selecting news sources includes assessing their societal relevance, public reach, and impact. Trust in the news media is a key factor in this assessment, as studies have shown a relationship between trust levels and news consumption habits (Kalogeropoulos et

al., 2019; Ladd, 2012; Mourão et al., 2018; Tsfatı & Cappella, 2003, 2005). As Strömbäck et al. (2020) summarized, media trust correlates with greater use of news media, while media distrust is linked to increased use of non-mainstream sources, though the relationship is modest (Ladd, 2012).

According to Kohring and Matthes (2007), trust in news media involves placing confidence in specific selections made by journalists. They propose that four dimensions of journalistic selectivity underlie this trust construct, derived from the function of news media. These dimensions are: "trust in the selectivity of topics," "trust in the selectivity of facts," "trust in the accuracy of depictions," and "trust in journalistic assessment."

Therefore, selecting and analyzing highly trusted news sources in South Korea was a mission for fulfilling the significance of the study. Based on insights from the Digital News Report 2023 by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, audience trust in the news media in South Korea is notably low, at just 28%. (2022) Despite this, MBC News and KBS News emerged as the most trusted among the 15 established media outlets in South Korea, with trust rates of 58% and 55%, respectively, and relatively low non-trust rates. TV Chosun, although exhibiting lower trust compared to the other two outlets, remains one of the 15 most utilized and established media outlets in South Korea. Additionally, the report shows MBC News Online and KBS News Online hold significant shares of weekly online media news reach at 24% and 23% respectively, ranking among the top sources. However, the most utilized sources are online portals like Naver and Daum, which function as search engines similar to Google Search rather than traditional news outlets like BBC.

4.2.2. The selection of news articles

Following the selection of news media outlets, a total of six steps of filtering were applied to select articles from those sources for analysis.

Step 1: Filtering by the keyword, specifically the late actor's name "이선균."

To investigate journalistic ethical issues in news articles and the processes involved in their production, this study focused on articles related to the Korean actor Lee Sun Kyun's scandal and subsequent death. Articles written in Korean that contained the term "이선균" ("Lee Sun Kyun") were collected from MBC News, KBS News, and TV Chosun News. Initially, a

comprehensive collection was conducted without imposing any time restrictions, encompassing all articles available in the websites' archives. This collection was conducted through a keyword search using the actor's name "이선균," yielding a database containing 1,707 articles as of April 13, 2024. Specifically, 788 articles were sourced from MBC News, 731 from KBS News, and 188 from TV Chosun News.

Step 2: Filtering by the published date, starting from the first article on the scandal.

Subsequently, a second step involved filtering the articles to focus solely on those related to the drug allegation scandal. So, this filtering has been done by deviding articles since 20.October 2023, where the first news about the drug allegation appeared and all other articles before that which were related to the actor in general.

For instance, 454 of 788 Articles from **MBC News** were published between 2007.09.30 - 2023.09.26, regarding the late Lee Sun Kyun's lifelong career. This shows the left 334 Articles or else 42,3% of the entire archive were published in the last 6 months namely between 2023.10.20 - 2024.04.13.

KBS News archive shows also similar phanomene. 513 articles of the total 731 articles were appeared between 1995-2023.09.26. In these 28 years, approximately 18 articles per year, in other words 1,5 article appeared per month. Yet between the time period of the drug allegation scandal 218 articles were published. More especifically to see, from the first article about the drug alligation until the suicide report, which is from 2023. 10.20. until 2023. 12.27 (2 month 7 days) there were 151 articles were published, which means at least 2 articles appeared each day.

TV Chosun News webpage had the least number of archived articles related to Lee Sun Kyun, yet the majority of the articles, namely 176 Articles) out of 188 articles were published since 2023.10.20 thematizing drug allegation. So, only 12 Articles related to the actor appeared between 2014-2021. This statistic shows how the

Step 3: Filtering by the Phases of Publications

Following the initial selection process, a more detailed filtering was conducted. All articles in the dataset were filtered into two parts: the first covering the period from October 20, 2023, when Lee Sun Kyun was first implicated in the drug allegation, until December 27, 2023, the date of his death. The second part encompassed the period from December 27, 2023,

onwards, focusing on the news reporting on his death. This filtering aimed to extract at least two articles from each phase of publication. The phases were based on the investigation process, which was crucial for understanding the reporting timeline and the evolution of information. Following each of Lee Sun Kyun's appearances at the police station for investigation, there was a noticeable surge in the number of news articles. Lee Sun Kyun underwent three investigations by the Incheon Police: the first on October 28, 2023, lasting approximately one hour; the second on November 4, 2023, lasting about three hours; and the third, the most extensive, from December 23 to December 24, 2023, lasting approximately 19 hours. Additionally, from January onwards, the focus shifted predominantly to the investigation and other related news rather than specifically on Lee Sun Kyun; therefore, those articles were excluded.

MBC News

- 2023.10.20 - 2023.12.26 (until the death news) (170 Articles)
- 2023.12.27 - 2024.04.13 (after and with the death news) (164 Articles)

KBS News

- 2023.10.20 - 2023.12.26. (151 articles)
- 2023.12.27 - 2024.04.04 (67 Articles after his death)

TV Chosun News

- 2023.10.20 - 2023.12.26 (115 Articles)
- 2023.12.27 - 04.13.2024 (61 Articles)

Step 4: Filtering out previously analyzed or critiqued articles

Additionally, certain articles and professional actions, which were singled out by both professional and unprofessional critics as examples of unethical journalistic practices in the case of Lee Sung Kyun, were identified here. These articles were intentionally selected for more detailed analysis, building upon previous studies. For example, an article dated November 24, 2023, from the KBS News website was chosen due to its mention in the criticism presented during a press conference held by cultural and artistic professionals. During the conference, film director Bong, along with fellow directors Lee Won Tae and Jang Hang-jun, actors Kim Eui-sung and Choi Duk-moon, and singer Yoon Jong-shin, criticized the police and press for their treatment of celebrity crime and alleged "unjust character assassination." They specifically called out the TV network KBS for exclusively releasing phone records between actor Lee Sun Kyun and an employee of a bar where he had allegedly taken drugs.

Step 5: Filtering out disqualified articles

Another crucial step in selecting analysis materials involved avoiding disqualified articles. This entailed excluding articles that exhibited characteristics of clickbait, repetition, insufficient content, redundant information, and obvious sensationalist titles designed to grab attention rather than provide informative content.

4.3. Data analysis

4.3.1. Category formation

In this section of Chapter 4, the general procedure of this data analysis within its detailed methods will be introduced. Qualitative content analysis, as delineated by Mayring (2000), encompasses several essential procedures, notably inductive and deductive category development. In this study, we have opted for deductive category development in 2 different analyses based on the research questions and research material. In general, analyses include all articles before and after the suicide reporting. Only the subcategories, such as ethical mishandlings on reporting on Suicide, solely concentrate on the suicide reporting itself.

In the deductive content analysis method, categories are established and defined before analyzing the data material. The goal is to extract predetermined elements from the material by passing through the entire dataset regarding predetermined structures. Based on these criteria of order, the basic shape and profile of the material are assessed (cf. Mayring, 2010, p. 65). Therefore, in this study, both global and national journalistic ethics codes, as well as guidelines for ethical practices—particularly local, namely South Korean ethics codes for journalism—are the criteria of order determining the basic shape and profile of the material.

As elucidated by Mayring (2010), the qualitative analysis process entails a meticulously controlled assignment of categories to textual passages, a methodology aligned with the objectives of our study. Our adaptation of this approach involves a thorough filtering of ethics codes and ethical practices based on their contextual relevance to our research inquiries and materials. These filtered elements are then grouped according to their connection to the research material and research questions. For instance, if there exists an ethical code pertaining to the textual content of a journalistic work, all codes related to text are grouped together for research question 1. Details will be elucidated in each analysis part (see Sections 5.4. to 5.7.).

Another factor supporting the suitability of this method for this specific analysis is a (partially) standardized data collection instrument has been utilized (*Meier, 2014*). This instrument involves categorizing criticizing points (ethic codes) and criticized objects (elements of the articles) separately, and analyzing each element from the articles and its related ethic codes.

Categorization has been conducted based on ethical codes, with South Korean journalistic ethics serving as the fundamental lens for critiquing and analyzing the data. Specifically, the Korea Newspaper Association, the Korea Association of Newspapers and Broadcasting Editors, and the Korea Journalists Association have endorsed and established the revised Newspaper Code of Ethics and Practice Guidelines as the primary guidelines. These were categorized by their context. For instance, all privacy-threatening data would be placed in a category for privacy concerning ethical codes to be analyzed through that criterion.

4.3.2. Translation of research data

It is worth noting that not only a theoretical background and ethical codes serve as foundational bases for the analysis, but also the research materials themselves require preparation before analysis. This entails translating the selected articles from Korean into English, which typically involves 2-3 steps of translation.

The study materials are selected from original South Korean online news websites' archives, necessitating a multi-step translation process to ensure accuracy. This translation process is either supported by online artificial intelligence translation programs such as Google Translate, Systransoft.com, ChatGPT, Dict.com (for English to German or German to English), and Korean.dict.naver.com (for English to Korean), or conducted manually word by word.

The translation from Korean to English is conducted in several steps. Initially, each individual sentence of the text is translated using whole text translation programs like Google Translate and Systransoft.com. Subsequently, each word in the sentence is manually translated to identify any secondary or alternative meanings. Thirdly, the meaning and interpretation of the sentence are verified using ChatGPT by querying the intended meaning conveyed by the sentence. Finally, the entire sentence is translated from Korean into German and Mongolian to observe how the sentence is translated in other languages. Subsequently, it is translated back into English from German or Mongolian to confirm the translation and mitigate mistranslations.

Following this, the translated articles are collected and analyzed in English using MAXQDA.

4.3.3. Data evaluation of the analysis

These elements are systematically analyzed to discern recurring language patterns and their potential implications for ethical considerations in media reporting on the scandal involving Lee Sun Kyun.

Each element is evaluated to understand its significance and ethical implications within the context of media coverage surrounding the scandal.

4.4. Analysis of Text Elements

4.4.1. Purpose of the Analysis

In this Analysis, Research Question 1 serves as the focal point, guiding the examination of specific language patterns within the South Korean online coverage of Lee Sun Kyun in relation to the scandal and their potential contribution to ethical distortion in the media.

4.4.2. Material of the Analysis

Here, the textual elements such as words, sentences or paragraphs of the articles serve as the study material. The research data collection involved a total of 57 online articles obtained from three distinct online media outlets.

4.4.3. Categorization of the Analysis:

The analysis categorizes textual elements into 4 distinct groups, each corresponding to ethical codes sharing similar content. Within these categories, specific textual components are carefully selected for critique based on relevant ethical guidelines. This process targets elements potentially violating the respective ethical standards, subjecting them to thorough examination and analysis.

Category-1 Privacy

Category definition: In this category, all textual elements (words, sentences or paragraphs) that divulge personal information, details of private life, familial relationships,

family related information or private relationships are collected and analyzed under the criteria of ethic codes.

Coding Rule: The coding rule is based on specific Practical Guidelines for Journalistic Ethics of South Korea, particularly focusing on the guidelines for privacy protection, Article 12 and Article 7 (Korea Press Ethics Commission, 2021). These guidelines urge journalists to exercise caution when reporting on or opining about individuals' private lives, unless such disclosure is deemed absolutely necessary for the public interest. In this category, ethical codes merged into certain subcategories, and textual elements that might violate a subcategory are categorized there and examined to determine if they violated these ethical codes.

Subcategory 1.1. Personal Information

Definition: This section focuses on texts revealing personal information about the deceased actor Lee Sun Kyun, which are organized and analyzed. Personal information encompasses details unrelated to the scandal itself, but rather pertaining to his private life. This includes his income, financial challenges, phone call records, and even after his demise, the disclosure of his private funeral date and location.

Coding Rule: Within this subcategory, textual elements are scrutinized to assess whether they contravene (Article 12, Privacy Protection, Point 2.), which stipulates the prohibition of unauthorized searches of personal information. This code dictates that the searching or utilization of personal data stored on digital devices without the explicit consent of the owner or administrator is impermissible.

Example:

- *“It has been revealed that Lee Sun-kyun's drama appearance fee amounts to 200 million won per episode. According to the information disclosed by Lee Sang-heon, a member of the Culture, Sports, and Tourism Committee of the National Assembly from the Democratic Party, Lee Sun-kyun earned a total of 2.4 billion won by receiving 200 million won per episode for his appearance in a 12-episode terrestrial drama earlier this*

year. In contrast, supporting actors in the same drama received a minimum appearance fee of 100,000 won.” (KBS News, 2023, Oct 25)

- *“The police are said to have secured records of about 10 phone calls between Mr. Lee and Mr. A this year.” (KBS News. 'Drug Ingestion' Actor Lee Sun Kyun Booked... Entertainment Establishment Employee Arrested. (Kim, 2023, Oct 23, KBS News)*

Subcategory 1.2. Private Relationships

Definition: This subsection is dedicated to analyzing texts that divulge the private relationships of the deceased actor Lee Sun Kyun. Private relationships encompass details either related or unrelated to the scandal itself but rather pertain to his privacy. This includes his private communication records with the entertainment bar manager, information regarding multiple visits to her residence, the duration of their private interactions, etc.

Coding Rule: Within this subcategory, textual elements are meticulously reviewed to ascertain if they violate (Article 12, Privacy Protection, Point 1.), which prohibits the invasion of privacy by intruding into individuals' private lives without consent. Additionally, the examination extends to determine compliance with (Article 12, Privacy Protection, Point 4.), which underscores the ethical imperative to exercise caution when reporting on the private lives of public figures. Even when such reporting or expression of opinions is undertaken for public interest, it emphasizes the necessity to maintain moderation and avoid excessive intrusion.

Example:

- *“KBS obtained phone call recordings between Lee Sun-kyun and nightclub manager Mrs. A.” (Yoon, 2023, November 24. KBS News).*
- *Lee Sun-kyun · Manager A/Voice distortion: "I really like you too. Do you know that? (I don't know. You never express it)."*
The friendly atmosphere changes abruptly after A mentioned in September that he was being threatened by someone.

Manager A · Lee Sun-kyun/Voice distortion: "(Why it got leaked and what they want is not clear now...) So even when I say 'send it, send it,' there's not even one photo coming."

During this process, there are exchanges that are suspected to involve drug use.

- *Manager A · Lee Sun-kyun/Voice distortion: "I'm your senior, (older than you). (Yeah.) If you smoke marijuana next to me, I wouldn't inhale, you know? (Yeah?) Because it lingers in the body for a long time. (Yeah.) You see that in the kit." (Yoon, 2023, November 24. KBS News).*

Subcategory 1.3. Familial Information

Definition: This subsection is dedicated to analyzing texts that disclose news related to the family of the actor Lee Sun Kyun. Familial information encompasses the mention of his wife's name, coverage of the family's situation in light of the scandal, and reporting on the wife's career, among other familial aspects.

Coding Rule: Within this subcategory, textual elements are meticulously reviewed to ascertain if they violate (Article 7, Crime Reporting and Respect for Human Rights), which stipulates that journalists must respect the human rights of suspects and defendants in criminal cases before guilt is confirmed. In particular, the human rights of victims and their families who are unrelated to the crime must be protected. Additionally, as outlined in Article 7, Point 3, when reporting on a criminal case, the identities of family members who are unrelated to the crime should not be disclosed.

Example:

- *"The widely known actress Jeon Hye-jin is the wife of Lee Sun-kyun. Recently, the fact that she sold a building at a loss has been brought to light, leading to speculation that it is related to the 350 million won Lee Sun-kyun allegedly paid due to threats he received." (Issue Entertainment, KBS News. 2023, October 25)*

Category 2. Sensationalism

Category Definition: This category encompasses all textual elements, including words, sentences, or paragraphs, that disseminate sensational information or seek public attention, often for the purpose of sensationalism and profit gain. It includes sensational or emotionally charged titles, quotes and citations, expressions of emotion or reaction, as well as the use of vulgar or slang words. Additionally, the frequency, namely the repetitiveness of the same content, is considered a subcategory, as it represents one form of sensationalism.

Coding Rule: The coding rule is derived from specific Practical Guidelines for Journalistic Ethics of South Korea, with particular focus on reporting rules and editorial guidelines outlined in Article 3 and Article 10 (Korea Press Ethics Commission, 2021). Similar to Category 1, ethical codes merged into certain subcategories, and textual elements that might violate one or several ethic codes there categorized and examined.

Subcategory 2.1. Title

Definition: This subsection is dedicated to analyzing all 57 titles, focusing on emotionalizing, questioning, exaggerating, or distorting styles.

Coding Rule: Within this subcategory, textual elements are meticulously reviewed to ascertain if they violate (Article 10, Editorial Guidelines, Point 1, Principle of the Title), which stipulates that "The title should represent the summary or core content of the article and should not exaggerate or distort the article content."

Example:

- "Seo Kyung-deok criticizes Lee Sun-kyun's drug scandal, saying, 'Left a stain on the global pride, 'Parasite'" (Entertainment I, MBC News. 2023, October 23)

- "Lee Sun-kyun bows his head in apology and becomes emotional, nearly to the point of tears, when his family is mentioned." (Entertainment I, MBC News. 2023, October 21)

- [Exclusive] “I received a birthday present and found three types of drugs” ... Doctor suspected of supplying drugs will be examined for warrant tomorrow (Yoon, 2023, November 26, KBS NEWS)
- "Tears shed at 'Late Lee Sun-kyun's' funeral... Jeon Hye-jin and two sons bid final farewell" (Kwak, 2023, December 29, MBC News)

Subcategory: 2.2. Unrelated information

Definition: This subsection is dedicated to analyzing texts containing sensationalizing information unrelated to the scandal, which may potentially lead to misinformation, false information, and defamation. This includes naming other individuals involved in drug allegations under the title of Lee Sun Kyun's case, citing the case of Lee Sun Kyun as an example of a general increase in drug consumption, reporting on illegal drug selling actions, and referencing past instances of illegal drug purchases by the entertainment establishment manager.

Coding Rule: Within this subcategory, textual elements are meticulously reviewed to ascertain if they violate (Article 11, Honor and Respect for Credibility, Point 1, Prohibition of Defamation and Damage to Reputation or Credit), which stipulates that "Individuals' or organizations' rights to dignity, honor, and credit must not be undermined through misinformation, inaccurate reporting, distorted coverage, reports unrelated to the public interest, or vulgar expressions."

Example:

- *“It's not just Lee who is under investigation; Hwang Ha-na, a third-generation member of Namyang Dairy Products who already has a prior drug conviction, is also among those being investigated by the police.”* (Lee, 2023, October 25. MBC News)
- *“In addition to these people, the police are still conducting investigations before charging five people, including Hwang Hana, the granddaughter of the founder of*

Namyang Dairy Products, and aspiring singer B. Both Mr. Hwang and Mr. B have a history of being convicted in the past on charges such as drug use of philopon.”
(Entertainment I, MBC News, 2023, October 25)

Subcategory 2.3. Vulgar slang words

Definition: Textual elements categorized and analyzed under this subcategory are words that are unprofessional and lack respect towards the suspect. Even if they are reported as quotes or citations of others' opinions on the case, they are included in this category.

Coding Rule: Within this subcategory, textual elements are meticulously reviewed to ascertain if they violate (Article 3, Reporting Rules, Point 10, Use of Standard Language), which stipulates that “When writing press articles, the rule is to use standard language and avoid causing discomfort to readers by using vulgar slang.”

Example:

- *"If you've committed a crime, you have to pay for it, and it's very undesirable to avoid the crime in this way." "No longer should criminals found dead be glorified as victims."*
(Lee, 2023, December 28)

Subcategory 2.4. Sensationalizing and Emotionalizing

Definition: Within this subcategory, textual elements are scrutinized for instances where journalists inject personal emotions or reactions into their reporting, or where they highlight the emotional responses of others involved in the story. This includes the use of descriptive adjectives such as shocking, disastrous, saddening, regretful, shameful, and others to evoke strong emotional responses from the audience.

Coding Rule: Within this subcategory, textual elements are meticulously reviewed to ascertain if they violate (Article 3, Reporting Rules, Point 6, Prohibition of Sensational Reporting), which stipulates that “When reporting illegal or unethical acts such as crime, violence, or animal abuse, sensational or provocative expressions must not be used, and they must not be treated in a vulgar manner.” Additionally, Article 3, Point 7 (Careful Reporting of Disasters), states, “When reporting disasters or large-scale events, avoid reporting based on interest, and do not use expressions that are provocative or may cause unnecessary fear. Particular care must be taken to avoid violating the human rights, such as reputation or privacy, of victims of disasters and accidents, victims, and their families.”

Example:

- *“Various rumors are swirling around actor Lee Sun-kyun's drug case, growing like a snowball.”* (Kim, 2023, October 23. KBS News)

- *“The shaman said, “You foolish man. Don’t ruin everything you’ve worked so hard for in a single day. No matter how much you think you can outsmart it, it won’t work. Especially be careful in October,” causing astonishment.”* (Lee, 2023, October 20. KBS News)

- *“Even more shocking was that the resident of the apartment, who provided refuge to the fleeing female manager, was revealed to be the one helping her evade capture.”* (Lee, 2023, November 23. MBC News)

Subcategory 2.5. "Retransmission"

Definition: This category encompasses articles, either in their entirety or specific quotes, citations, or information, that have been repeatedly published for unfair purposes, with

alterations made to their titles and content within the 57 articles of our data collection, regardless of the media outlet.

Coding Rule: Within this subcategory, articles are reviewed to ascertain if they violate (Article 10, Editorial Guidelines, Point 9, Prohibition of Unfair Retransmission), which stipulates, “The same or similar articles shall not be repeatedly published for unfair purposes by changing the title and part of the article.”

Example:

- *“Mr. Lee has been accused of taking various types of drugs, including marijuana, at the Seoul home of Mr. A, known as the manager of an entertainment establishment, since early this year.”* (Hwang, 2023, November 4. KBS News)

- *“I will faithfully participate in today’s investigation process.”* (Jang, 2023, November 4. MBC News)

Category 3. Biased reporting

Definition: This category encompasses all textual elements (words, sentences, or paragraphs) that express opinions, predictions, unconfirmed information, or conclusions. This includes not only the reporter’s personal opinions but also the reporting of other people’s opinions and critiques related to the case, as well as confusing reports that present predictions or assumptions as facts.

Coding Rule: The coding rule is based on specific Practical Guidelines for Journalistic Ethics in South Korea, particularly focusing on reporting rules and principles of criticism outlined in Article 3 and Article 9 (Korea Press Ethics Commission, 2021). As with other categories, ethical codes generate subcategories by their context. Textual elements that might

violate a specific subcategory are categorized accordingly and examined to determine if they violate these ethical codes.

Subcategory 3.1. Unconfirmed information

Definition: Within this subcategory, textual elements are scrutinized they report unconfirmed, not verified information as fact, such as naming specific drug names, amount of them, and method of consuming a drug, while it was not confirmed that the late actor Lee Sun Kyun consumed any drug, revealing investigation information without naming the source.

Coding Rule: Textual elements in this subcategory are reviewed for potential violations of ethical guidelines related to fact check. These include Article 3, Point 4, which mandates that reasons must be clearly stated when reporting information from unclear or unconfirmed sources. Article 3, Point 9 emphasizes the need to confirm the truth of facts provided by investigative agencies and to give suspects an opportunity to explain. Article 4, Point 2 prohibits reporting or commenting on judicial documents before a judgment or decision is made, with an exception for information provided by relevant reporters from judicial documents.

Example:

- *“In particular, the police confirmed that Lee's suspected instances and frequency of drug use were identified. During police questioning, A claimed that Lee had used drugs on five occasions, including October 27 last year. The police compared A's statements with CCTV footage, text messages, taxi records, etc., and identified four of these occasions.”*
(Yoon, 2023, November 24. KBS News)

- *“... accused of providing drugs to actor Lee Sun-kyun (48) through the manager of an entertainment bar was dismissed by the court.”* (Song, 2023, November 27. TV Chosun News)

- *“Mr. Lee is accused of administering marijuana and other drugs several times at the home of Mr. A, a female employee of a Gangnam entertainment establishment, since the beginning of this year.”* (Entertainment I, MBC News. 2023, October 25)

Subcategory 3.2. Opinion

Definition:

This subcategory examines textual elements that solely present the reporter’s opinion, predictions, assumptions, or the opinions of others, rather than presenting facts. This includes delivering or citing other people’s opinions related to the case.

Coding Rule:

In this subcategory, textual elements are reviewed to identify violations of ethical guidelines. These include Article 3, Point 1, which requires news articles to clearly distinguish between facts and opinions and to avoid bias or selfish motives in their selection and writing. Additionally, Article 3, Point 2 mandates fair reporting by ensuring that contested cases are not presented in a biased manner and that the credibility of public opinion polls is clearly stated, avoiding distortion of statistics.

Example:

- *“Lee Sun-kyun is going through the most important disaster of his profession withinside the amusement industry.”* (Kim, 2023, October 23. KBS News)
- *“If the drug suspicions are revealed to be true, Lee Seon-kyun is scheduled to appear in dramas and movies, etc. Setbacks in future works are expected to be inevitable.”* (No, 2023, October 20. TV Chosun News)

- *“He also added that there have been cases where guilt was pronounced even without considering the results of detailed examinations if the evidence of drug use was clear.”* (Song, 2023, November 27. TV Chosun News).
- *“Real estate experts believe that considering acquisition taxes at the time of purchase and corporate taxes at the time of sale, there would be little to no actual profit.”* (Kim, 2023, October 23. KBS News)

Subcategory 3.3. Criticism

Definition: This subcategory critically assesses textual elements that solely present the reporter’s criticism or convey and cite others’ criticism toward a scandal or subject. It involves evaluating the balance, accuracy, and fairness of such criticisms within journalistic reporting.

Coding Rule: In this subcategory, textual elements are meticulously reviewed for potential violations of several ethical guidelines.

These include ensuring that individuals or organizations criticized in news articles are given an opportunity for rebuttal (Article 3, Reporting Rules, Point 3), and respecting the honor and personal rights of suspects and defendants, recognizing their presumption of innocence (Article 7, Crime Reporting and Respect for Human Rights, Point 1).

Editorials and reviews must express opinions fairly, correctly, and based on facts while maintaining balance and moderation, avoiding bias and distortion (Article 9, Principles of Criticism), and can express political positions freely, provided they do not violate substantive law (Article 9, Principles of Criticism, Point 2).

Journalists must not unfairly damage the dignity of their subjects (Article 11, Honor and Respect for Credibility, Point 2), and must exercise caution and moderation when reporting on the private

lives of public figures, even when doing so in the public interest (Article 12, Privacy Protection, Point 4).

Example:

- *“Thus, merely being associated with individuals who have been involved in numerous incidents has led to negative public opinion swirling around Lee Sun-kyun.”* (Kim, 2023, October 23. KBS News)
- *“Professor Seo also criticized, “Variety quickly spread the news, stating, ‘Lee Seon-kyun, the lead actor of the Oscar-winning film ‘Parasite,’ is under police investigation for drug use.” He strongly condemned, “This incident has left a stain not only on ‘Parasite,’ a film that brought pride to South Korean cinema and garnered worldwide acclaim, but also on the history of Korean cinema.””* (Entertainment I, MBC News, 2023, October 23)
- *“Lee Sun-gyun, a representative lovebird couple in the entertainment industry and a loving wife, did something like this?”* (Entertainment I, MBC News, 2023, October 20)

Category 4 Reporting on Suicide

Category Definition: This category encompasses all textual elements (words, sentences, or paragraphs) from 14 articles published between December 27th and December 29th, 2023, reporting on the late actor Lee Sun Kyun’s death. Categorized and analyzed textual elements include detailed information about the death, such as the exact location, date, car model, and reporting the method of suicide. It also involves revelations of suicide notes or wills and reports on other celebrities' reactions, etc.

Coding Rule: The coding rule is based on specific Practical Guidelines for Journalistic Ethics of South Korea, particularly focusing on reporting rules in suicide reporting, as outlined in

Article 3 (Korea Press Ethics Commission, 2021). Textual elements are collected and examined in two subcategories.

Subcategory 4.1. Detailed Information

Definition: This subcategory focuses on detailed information about the death, including the exact location, date, car model, and reporting the method of suicide.

Coding Rule: Textual elements will be analyzed according to Article 3, Reporting Rules, Point 8 (Caution when Reporting on Suicide), which mandates that reporting on suicide must exercise caution due to its societal impact. Reports should avoid stimulating public curiosity by refraining from specifically describing the causes and methods of suicide. Additionally, the word ‘suicide’ should be avoided in headlines.

Example:

- *“Mr. Lee was found unconscious in a car near Wongyeong Park in Seoul's Jongno-gu around 10:30 a.m. today.”* (Park, 2023, December 27. KBS News)
- *“CCTV footage captured Lee's vehicle heading towards Warung Park around 11:30 PM last night.”* (Gwak, 2023, December 27. TV Chosun)
- *“Inside the car, items suggesting an extreme choice, along with a liquor bottle, were found.”* (Gwak, 2023, December 27. TV Chosun)

Subcategory 4.2: Suicide Note

Definition: Within this subcategory, all textual elements in the article that reveal or sensationalize the suicide note (will) are examined. These elements contribute to violating ethical standards regarding sensational reporting.

Coding Rule: Textual elements pertaining to the suicide note are evaluated against the following ethical guideline Article 3, Reporting Rules, Point 6 (Prohibition of Sensational Reporting). It mandates that reporting on illegal or unethical acts such as crime, violence, or animal abuse must abstain from using sensational or provocative expressions. Furthermore, these subjects must not be treated in a vulgar manner.

Example:

- “Lee Sun-gyun wrote a note to Jeon Hye-jin saying, "There's nothing we can do," and "I believe this is our only option.” (Baek, 2023, December 28. MBC News)

4.5. Analysis of Visual Elements

4.5.1. Purpose of the Analysis

This analysis focuses on Research Question 2, which examines specific visual elements such as images, graphic design, and video materials—for potential ethical concerns and violations. These violations include actions like infringing on an individual's private space to obtain photographs.

4.5.2. Material of the Analysis

The analysis encompasses all 57 articles, including those covering the death of Lee Sun Kyun, with a focus solely on the visual elements of the reporting. These elements include images, pictures, photographs, graphic designs, visual effects, and screenshots of videos attached to the news articles. Additionally, it includes any visual evidence indicating that photojournalists violated ethical codes during their journalistic work.

4.5.3. Categorization of the Analysis:

The analysis categorizes visual elements into two distinct groups, each corresponding to ethical codes with similar content. Within these categories, specific visual components are carefully selected for critique based on relevant ethical guidelines. This rigorous process targets

elements that potentially violate ethical standards, subjecting them to thorough examination and analysis.

Category 1. Privacy

Category Definition: This category encompasses all visual elements containing personal information, such as private property, private relationships, family members, or created by violating a suspect's privacy, furthering human rights. Additionally, private farewell pictures and videos are selected and analyzed under this category.

Coding Rule: The fundamental ethical criteria guiding this category are Article 7 and 12 of the Practical Guidelines for Journalistic Ethics of South Korea, focusing on privacy protection (Korea Press Ethics Commission, 2021). These guidelines urge journalists to exercise caution when reporting or opining on individuals' private lives, unless such disclosure is deemed absolutely necessary for the public interest.

Subcategory 1.1: Invasion of Privacy

Definition: This subcategory focuses on visualizations that reveal details of a suspect's private life, including family members, private property, and personal relationships.

Coding Rule: Visual elements selected for examination will be evaluated against Article 12, Privacy Protection, Point 3, which prohibits filming, reporting, or covering an individual's private life or property without consent. Exceptions can be made for individuals in the public eye.

Example: Using a photograph from Lee Sun-kyun and his wife Jeon Hye-Jin's wedding in 2009 as a press image for an online article unrelated to his wedding or family life (see Figure B5, Appendix B).

Subcategory 1.2. Suspect's privacy

Definition: This subcategory focuses on visualizations generated during interviews, recordings, and captures of individuals at the police office, both before and after investigation.

Coding Rule: Visual elements selected for examination will be evaluated in accordance with Article 7, Crime Reporting and Respect for Human Rights, Point 2, which emphasizes the

importance of careful filming when capturing suspects, defendants, witnesses, or other individuals involved in criminal cases. Journalists must respect their right to privacy while also considering the public interest to the fullest extent possible.

Example: Video screenshots proving the number of journalists and cameramen who arrived at the police investigation site and filmed the suspect (see Figure B48 to Figure B50, Figure B61, Figure B67, and Figure B72, Appendix B).

Subcategory 1.3. Secret filming

Definition: This subcategory focuses on visualizations generated through secret filming, which involves recording or capturing visual footage without the knowledge or consent of the individuals being filmed, especially in private settings where they have a reasonable expectation of privacy. These visual elements may have been obtained in locations such as Lee Sun Kyun's home or private events, where he or his family expected privacy but were unknowingly recorded.

Coding Rule: Visual elements selected for examination will be assessed in accordance with the ethical guideline outlined in Article 2, Reporting Rules, Point 5, which prohibits the use of methods such as wiretapping or secret filming in journalism.

Example: Filming grieving family members and other prominent entertainment industry colleagues of the late actor from a hidden spot, despite the announcement that the farewell ceremony would be held privately (see Figure B57 to B59, Figure B73, Appendix B).

Category 2. Sensationalism

Category Definition: This category encompasses all visual elements intended for attention-grabbing purposes, regardless of their relevance or accuracy. It includes images that are misleading, sensationalized, emotionally manipulative, or exaggerated. This encompasses visuals such as pictures of drugs, depictions of drug consumption methods, emotionally charged imagery, unrelated cover images, screenshots of private messages, and photographs capturing the grief of celebrities and family members during private farewells.

Coding Rule: The ethical framework guiding this category is derived from Articles 2, 3, and 10 of the Practical Guidelines for Journalistic Ethics of South Korea. These articles emphasize the prohibition of sensational reporting, unauthorized use of materials, and the publication of photos unrelated to the context of the article (Korea Press Ethics Commission, 2021). All selected materials will undergo analysis within this category, adhering to these ethical principles.

Subcategory 2.1. Unrelated Misinformation

Definition: This subcategory pertains to photos or images that lack factual relevance to the news context but possess the potential to misinform. They often depict drug consumption methods, such as injection or drug powders, even when the news regarding drug use is unconfirmed. These visuals are typically employed to heighten attention to the news and promote sensationalism.

Coding Rule: Visual elements selected for examination will adhere to Article 10, Editorial Guidelines, Point 5 (Publishing Related Photos), which stipulates that press photos must directly relate to the substantive content of the article. In cases where indirectly related photos are used, this fact must be disclosed.

Example: Using images depicting specific drugs and methods of drug usage as press images for an online article, despite the drug allegation not being confirmed (see Figure B14 and B15, Appendix B).

Subcategory 2.2. Sensationalizing and Emotionalizing

Definition: This subcategory pertains to the selection and analysis of visual elements that lack contextual relevance to the text or news content but are strategically employed to captivate attention. These visuals often feature prominent faces or employ emotionalizing techniques, such as selecting sad-looking pictures, to evoke strong reactions from the audience. Examples include zooming in on the eyes of a suspect or depicting grieving family members.

Coding Rule: Visual elements are evaluated based on (Article 3, Reporting Rules, Point 6), which prohibits the use of sensational or provocative expressions when reporting on illegal or unethical acts such as crime, violence, or animal abuse. Additionally, (Article 10, Editorial Guidelines, Point 5) requires that press photos directly relate to the substantive content of the article. If indirectly related photos are used, this must be disclosed. Elements are examined to determine if they violate these guidelines.

Example: Using a blurred image of an entertainment establishment manager and editing it together with Lee Sun Kyun's picture (see Figure B4, B33, B34, Appendix B). Alternatively, using footage of other celebrities attending police investigations and editing it with Lee Sun Kyun's appearance (see Figure B12 and B39, Appendix B).

Subcategory 2.3. Unauthorized Use of Materials

Definition: This subcategory encompasses the unauthorized use of diverse content types, such as pictures, photographs, graphic designs, visual edits, phone call records, screenshots of private messages, etc., without the consent of the owner or administrator.

Coding rule: This subcategory is guided by (Article 2, Reporting Rules, Point 2), which explicitly prohibits the unauthorized use of materials. According to this guideline, content such as documents, data, photographs, videos, illustrations, music, internet postings, and comments must not be searched for or utilized without the consent of the owner or administrator, unless it is deemed necessary for public interest. However, the determination of public interest, particularly in cases involving national actors like Lee Sun Kyun, will be addressed in the results section rather than during the process of selecting and analyzing the materials.

Example: Creating an image transcript with text depicting two individuals talking on the phone: one side features Lee Sun Kyun's portrait, while the other side shows a female figure representing the manager of an entertainment establishment (see Figure B47, Appendix B). Another example involves publishing a screenshot of messages exchanged between a blackmailer and the manager of the entertainment establishment, discussing blackmail related to Lee Sun Kyun's alleged drug use (see Figure B36, Appendix B). Additionally, releasing CCTV footage showing actor Lee Sun Kyun driving to the park where he was found dead, in an apparent suicide, is another sensitive example (see Figure B70 and B71, Appendix B).

Chapter 5. Result

5.1. Result of Analysis 1

Analysis 1 examined the ethical dimensions of South Korean online media coverage of the Lee Sun Kyun scandal, focusing on the extent to which language patterns in journalistic reporting deviated from ethical standards. The analysis of 57 online articles revealed 4 significant ethical distortions, such as Privacy Invasion, Sensationalism, Biased reporting, and Improper reporting on suicide. In the subsequent sections, each of these findings will be explained in detail, supported by examples from the analyzed articles and a critical analysis of their implications.

5.1.1. Privacy Invasion

This section interprets the findings related to Sub-Research Question 1.1: “To what extent can specific language patterns in South Korean online media coverage of the Lee Sun Kyun scandal invade personal privacy?”

Finding 1: Unauthorized Search and Utilization of Personal Data

A comprehensive examination using MAXQDA revealed 23 segments extracted from 15 articles, all categorized under "personal information," indicating a breach of the ethical code governing Privacy Protection (Article 12, Privacy Protection, Point 2). This regulation strictly prohibits the unauthorized search or utilization of personal data stored on digital devices without explicit consent from the owner or administrator. For instance, the disclosure of the number of phone calls between Mr. Lee and Mrs. A, who is a manager of an entertainment establishment (KBS News, October 23, 2023), as well as reports indicating the actor's multiple visits to the manager's house linked with drug allegations, were sourced from police investigations, underscoring instances where personal information was divulged without proper authorization. Despite the information about the calls being uncovered during police investigations, its dissemination to the media by a police officer constituted an unauthorized means of information acquisition (Lee and Law, 2023).

Moreover, MBC News reported on chat records that disclosed threatening messages from a blackmailer regarding revealing the drug use and personal relationship between the actor and the manager of the entertainment establishment. Although these records were sourced from official investigations, their dissemination without appropriate authorization exemplified unauthorized searches of personal information and the utilization of such data without consent, in contravention of ethical guidelines. Further examples of privacy invasion included reports on Lee Sun Kyun's wife, Jeon Hye-jin, selling a property with the price included, and details regarding the actor's financial remuneration for drama appearances. These disclosures, made without explicit consent, infringed upon personal privacy rights.

Additionally, the announcement of Lee Sun Kyun's funeral details, despite prior official statements by the entertainment agency indicating a private ceremony, was another instance of privacy invasion. Detailed information regarding the funeral location, date, and time was disseminated across multiple news outlets, reflecting a disregard for privacy and ethical guidelines.

Finding 2: Intruding into Individuals' (Public Figures') Private Lives

A comprehensive examination using MAXQDA revealed 11 segments extracted from 7 articles, all categorized under "private relationship," indicating a breach of the ethical code governing privacy Article 12, Privacy Protection, Point 1. (see Appendix A), and the examination assessed compliance with Article 12, Privacy Protection, Point 4. (see Appendix A). It is worth noting that these reporting ethics rules emphasize that public interest takes precedence over the ethical code itself. However, in this study, it is emphasized that even when reporting or expressing opinions for public interest, moderation and avoidance of excessive intrusion are crucial.

The selected and analyzed texts (segments) indicated repeatedly reported information that would mislead the public about the private relationship between actor Lee Sun Kyun and the entertainment establishment manager, referred to as Mrs. A, who was suspected of drug use and offering drugs to Lee Sun Kyun at her residence multiple times. For instance, when KBS News revealed phone call records between the two, the transcription focused on personal aspects of their relationship rather than the drug allegations. The cited text was as follows:

[Lee Sun-kyun (to Manager A/Voice distortion): "I really like you too. Do you know that?

Manager A (to Lee Sun Kyun /Voice distortion): "I don't know. You never express it"]

Additionally to this transcript, KBS News pictured like: "The atmosphere changes abruptly after A mentioned in September that she was being threatened by someone" (KBS, 2023, Nov. 24).

This text, and reporting of information such as, "Lee Sun-kyun frequented a so-called '1% VIP establishment' located in Yeoksam-dong, Gangnam-gu, Seoul" (MBC News, October 23, 2023), or "Lee Sun-kyun started visiting this establishment through acquaintances, and it is also where he reportedly crossed paths with Mrs. A, who allegedly threatened him" (MBC News, 2023), reveals a public figure's private relationship and misleads readers with non-contextual information. Although the journalist did not explicitly state an affair or romantic relationship, the information potentially misled the public. This segment exemplifies an invasion of privacy by intruding into their private lives without consent and failing to maintain caution when reporting on public figures.

Finding 3: Disclosure of Family Members of the Suspect

Coding using MAXQDA revealed 9 segments extracted from 4 articles, all categorized under "familial information." This indicates a breach of the ethical code governing crime reporting and respect for human rights, specifically Article 7, Point 3 (see Appendix A).

The articles in question disclosed personal details about the family members of the suspect, Lee Sun Kyun, including their reactions, conditions, and actions regarding his suspected allegations, such as selling private property. For instance, MBC News Online reported that Jeon Hye-jin, the late actor's wife, sold a building located in Nonhyeon-dong, Gangnam-gu, Seoul, with a basement floor and eight above-ground floors for 15 billion won in May of last year, citing the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport's real transaction price disclosure system (October 24, 2023).

Another instance of privacy invasion through news reporting was the disclosure of assumptions about the family members' conditions, touching on aspects beyond the scandal itself, such as their general lifestyle and details concerning his children. MBC News Online reported, "But the reason Jeon Hye-jin, upon hearing the news, was able to keep it together and not collapse until the end was because of her two sons. What would happen to her two sons if she herself broke down? They are currently in the second year of middle school and the fifth year of elementary school. It is known that they are aware of their father's scandal, but currently, they do not have access to the Internet. Jeon Hye-jin finds herself in a situation where she is trying to stay composed and holding onto her sense of responsibility because she wants to be capable of caring for her children." (MBC News, 2023, Oct. 27) Another example is from online news on MBC News Online (October 26, 2023), citing opinions from individuals that include familial information: "Externally, while Sun-kyun Lee's activities were very active, Jeon Hyeyin's (his wife) were relatively less so. The reason is that Jeon Hyeyin sacrificed a lot as a mother and wife. She actively supported her husband with a mindset of taking care of the family and children more for her husband. Therefore, many work offers came to Jeon Hyeyin, but she rejected them all and remained relatively faithful to her family. As the eldest child went to study abroad in the United States and the second child entered fifth grade, she had more free time, and it was when she decided to actively pursue acting as a career."

The highlighted examples above demonstrate that Lee Sun Kyun's sons' grades and other private information, including personal criticism and opinions, were reported. This violates journalistic ethics, which emphasize that when reporting on a criminal case, identities of family

members who are not involved in the crime should not be disclosed, thus respecting the human rights of both the suspect and his family.

5.1.2. Sensationalism

This section interprets the findings related to Sub-Research Question 1.2: To what extent do language choices and patterns in the coverage of the Lee Sun Kyun scandal contribute to sensationalism?

Finding 1. Misleading and Exaggerated Titles

A comprehensive examination using MAXQDA revealed numerous titles that breached journalism ethics by misrepresenting or exaggerating the article content, violating the principle that titles should accurately reflect the summary or core content, as pointed out in (Article 10, Editorial Guidelines, Point 1, Principle of the Title of the Korea Press Ethics Commission, 2021).

To present the results more clearly, let's consider examples of misleading and exaggerated titles. Misleading titles in this study often involve the names of other prominent individuals unrelated to the case, suggest or question outcomes of the crime case that are not confirmed, and use hashtags or additional marks such as "exclusive," which mislead the importance of the case by sensationalizing titles. For instance, "Lee Sun-kyun, Overflowing Rumors #1%VIP #Hwang HanaXHan Seo-hee #Jeon Hye-jin Building #Conspiracy Theories [Comprehensive]" (MBC News online, 2023, October 24) exaggerates by including unrelated sensational elements. The title "Actor Lee Sun-kyun, suspected of drug use, found dead in a car... Left a suicide note last night and was out of contact" (TV Chosun News, 2023, December 27) distorts the truth by making a dramatic and unfounded claim about the actor's death.

The analysis results highlight that articles exaggerate their content through sensational and emotionalizing titles. Instances include citing and describing emotional statements within these titles. For instance, "Lee Sun-kyun bows his head and apologizes and gets emotional (about to cry) at the mention of his family" (MBC News Online, 2023, October 28), or "Lee Sun-kyun's wife, Jeon Hye-jin's reaction to drug allegations? 'Shock to the point of fainting'" (MBC News, 2023, October 26), or "Tears shed at 'Late Lee Sun-kyun's' funeral... Jeon Hye-jin and two sons bid final farewell" (MBC News, 2023, December 29). Additionally, criticism such as the title

"Seo Kyung Deok criticizes Lee Sun-kyun's drug scandal, saying, 'Left a stain on the global pride, 'Parasite'" (MBC News, 2023, October 30) exaggerates the core content, especially considering the crime case was not even confirmed yet.

Finding 2. Unrelated information

The study identifies multiple instances of violations of journalism ethics, specifically under Article 11, Honor and Respect for Credibility (see Appendix A), by including sensationalized details that are unrelated to the main content or title, such as naming other celebrities involved in drug allegations under Lee Sun Kyun's case, using his case to illustrate a general increase in drug consumption, or reporting on unrelated drug-related crimes within articles ostensibly focused on Lee Sun Kyun.

In a recent article from KBS News Online (October 23, 2023), it discusses an incident where Malaysian operatives attempted to smuggle 24kg of Philopon into the country by concealing it in their bodies. The report implies that Incheon Airport customs officials may have aided them in bypassing security checks without quarantine procedures. Additionally, the article mentions past illegal drug purchases by the entertainment establishment manager connected to Lee Sun Kyun's case. It also reports ongoing police investigations involving individuals like Hwang Hana, granddaughter of the Namyang Dairy Products founder, and an anonymous singer, both with histories of drug use. Such reporting runs the risk of leading readers to believe that the suspect is directly linked to all the drug allegations mentioned, as this unrelated information is reported under the title of Lee Sun Kyun's case. This could potentially mislead readers into assuming connections that have not been substantiated.

Finding 3. Sensational or Emotional expressions

Another finding uncovered breaches of journalism ethics by involving the reporting of illegal or unethical acts, such as crime, and utilizing sensational or provocative expressions, as outlined in (Article 3, Reporting Rules, Point 6, Prohibition of Sensational Reporting). Descriptive adjectives like "shocking," "disastrous," "saddening," "regretful," "shameful," and others were employed to evoke strong emotional responses from the audience. Additionally, the citation of a shaman's words like "You foolish man. Don't ruin everything you've worked so hard for in a single day. No matter how much you think you can outsmart it, it won't work.

Especially be careful in October." caused astonishment (MBC News, 2023, October 21), serving as evidence of intentionally using sensational or provocative expressions to garner attention and further question the unconfirmed investigation.

Furthermore, reporting disasters or large-scale events, reporting based on interest, and using expressions that are provocative or may cause unnecessary fear, as pointed out in Article 3, Point 7 (Careful Reporting of Disasters), were indicated with sentences like "Various rumors are swirling around actor Lee Sun-kyun's drug case, growing like a snowball." (MBC News, 2023, October 23) and "Jeon Hye-jin's initial reaction to this was shock and fear. She was reportedly in a state of shock close to fainting, as she had seen her husband, who was known as a tender father and husband, in such a situation. She is said to be trying to hold herself together with a sense of responsibility, thinking of her two sons, one in middle school and the other in elementary school." (MBC News, 2023, October 26).

Finding 4. Retransmission

It's noteworthy that the study found repeated publication of the same or similar articles with different visualizations and titles, which violates ethical guidelines (Article 10, Editorial Guidelines, Point 9, Prohibition of Unfair Retransmission). This finding is supported by examples such as the repetition of Lee Sun-kyun's agency statement in 8 out of 57 articles, the repetition of allegations regarding drug use at Mrs. A's Seoul home in 11 articles, and the citation of Lee Sun Kyun's statement at the police office in 8 articles.

One notable finding was the use of discomfort-causing words, though this was less frequent compared to other significant findings. This issue was observed in a single article, specifically Article 50 from MBC News Online (December 28, 2023), where public opinions were reported via comments on a YouTube channel. The article directly quoted statements such as, "If you've committed a crime, you have to pay for it, and it's very undesirable to avoid the crime in this way." Additionally, references were made to late former President Roh Moo-hyun and late former Mayor of Seoul, Park Won-soon, with assertions like, "No longer should criminals found dead be glorified as victims." This violated ethical guidelines under Article 3, Reporting Rules, Point 10, Use of Standard Language (see Appendix A).

5.1.3. Biased reporting

This section interprets the findings related to Sub-Research Question 1.3: To what extent does language in the coverage of the Lee Sun Kyun scandal reflect or create bias?

Finding 1. Unconfirmed information

The study found violations of ethical guideline Article 3, Point 4 (Principle of specifying unconfirmed reports, see Appendix A) in 26 segments coded from 16 out of 57 articles. These violations occurred by failing to specify unconfirmed reports, as exemplified by MBC News Online reporting that "Actor Lee Sun-kyun (48) was also found to have applied to psychotropic drugs other than marijuana" (2023, October 24), even though the marijuana consumption itself had not been confirmed yet.

Article 4, Judicial Reporting Rules, Point 2, Prohibition of prior reporting of judgments (see Appendix A), was violated when MBC News Online reported Ms. A's statement—a manager of an entertainment establishment, 29 years old—before any judgment was made. The report detailed, "I saw Lee Sun-kyun inhaling ketamine powder through a straw. When I mentioned ketamine, he said he was curious, so I procured it for him, and he used it," including specific dates and locations of the alleged incident (2023, December 27). This premature reporting could potentially influence public opinion and judgments before legal proceedings are completed.

The early reporting of detailed information about alleged criminal acts without confirmation, coupled with biased and leading questions such as "Do you admit to the drug use charge?" and "Is it your position that you did not use drugs at all?" violated Article 3, Reporting Rules, Point 9, Reporting on the facts of the suspect / Reporting on suspected crime. (see Appendix A).

Finding 2. Selected or written based on biased opinion

The study identified violations of ethical guideline Article 3, Reporting Rules, Point 1 (see Appendix A), in 33 segments across 18 out of 57 articles. These violations occurred by

selecting or writing based on biased opinions, assumptions by journalists themselves, or by presenting opinions without clearly distinguishing them from facts. For example, TV Chosun News (Article 23, October 20, 2023) stated, "If the drug suspicions are revealed to be true, Lee Seon-kyun is scheduled to appear in dramas and movies, etc. Setbacks in future works are expected to be inevitable." This statement illustrates a violation as it presents a speculative opinion about the future impact on Lee Seon-kyun's career without clearly distinguishing it from confirmed facts.

Distortions of Article 3, Reporting Rules, Point 2 (Fair reporting) were identified in instances where one side's argument was presented in a biased manner during coverage of contested cases. For example, KBS News (Article 20, October 30, 2023) reported, "In fact, actor Yoo Ah-in also tested positive for propofol, which initially came back negative in the simple test but was later confirmed in a more detailed examination. Therefore, the police are planning to request an urgent detailed evaluation from the National Forensic Service and summon Mr. Lee again soon." Similarly, in another article (KBS News, Article 43, November 27, 2023), it was stated, "He also added that there have been cases where guilt was pronounced even without considering the results of detailed examinations if the evidence of drug use was clear." These instances violated Article 7, Crime reporting and respect for human rights, Point 1 (Respect for the honor of suspects and defendants) as well, by potentially misleading the audience into believing that unconfirmed allegations could imply guilt, contrary to the presumption of innocence. This reporting failed to emphasize the importance of fair and balanced coverage in cases where guilt has not been proven.

Finding 3. Biased criticism

The study identified violations of ethical guidelines: Article 9, Principles of criticism; Article 11, Honor and Respect for Credibility, Point 2 (Respect for the Dignity of Subjects); and Article 12, Privacy protection, Point 4 (see Appendix A), in 16 coded segments from 9 out of 57 news articles. These violations occurred through editorials and reviews that expressed opinions not based on confirmed facts, lacked balance and moderation, and criticized the private life of a prominent figure, especially during the investigation phase when allegations about drug use and other rumors regarding the late actor were not substantiated.

An example of such violation is the criticism directed at unconfirmed rumors, such as speculation that Lee Sun Kyun had a private romantic relationship with the entertainment establishment manager, Mrs. A. Critical statements appeared in articles like "Lee Sun-gyun, a representative lovebird couple in the entertainment industry and a loving wife, did something like this?" (MBC NEWS, Article 10, 2023, October 27) and comments from Lee Jin-ho stating, "If it is proven through the police investigation that Lee Sun-kyun did not use drugs, he could be cleared of drug charges. However, the fact that Lee Sun-kyun transferred 350 million won to the drug extortionist alone has created room for misunderstanding among the public. Moreover, it is more problematic that as a married man, he met privately with the female manager of the entertainment establishment nearly seven times." (Article 9, MBC News, October 26). These criticisms and others, such as "Professor Seo also criticized, 'Variety quickly spread the news, stating, 'Lee Seon-kyun, the lead actor of the Oscar-winning film 'Parasite,' is under police investigation for drug use.'" He strongly condemned, 'This incident has left a stain not only on 'Parasite,' a film that brought pride to South Korean cinema and garnered worldwide acclaim, but also on the history of Korean cinema.'" (Article 12, MBC News, 2023, October 30), unfairly damaged the dignity of the subjects involved, as all information confirmed only as suspicion.

5.1.4. Reporting on Suicide

This section interprets the findings related to Sub-Research Question 1.4: How is the topic of suicide addressed in the coverage of the Lee Sun Kyun scandal, and what ethical concerns arise from these reporting practices?

Finding 1. Detailed Coverage of Suicide

The analysis of 14 articles reporting on the death of the late actor Lee Sun Kyun found that 8 out of these 14 articles, with 19 coded segments, violated ethical guideline Article 3, Reporting Rules, Point 8 (Caution when reporting on suicide) (see Appendix A). While the word 'suicide' was avoided in headlines, the reports included detailed information about the incident that potentially stimulated public curiosity by describing the case in detail. For example, KBS News Online reported, "Mr. Lee was found unconscious in a car near Wongyeong Park in Seoul's Jongno-gu around 10:30 a.m. today" (Article 55, 2023, December 27). Meanwhile, TV Chosun News reported, "CCTV footage captured Lee's vehicle heading towards Warung Park around 11:30 PM last night" and "20 minutes prior to this, the police

received a report from the manager stating that Lee had left home last night, leaving behind a note resembling a will, and could not be contacted" (Article 57, December 27).

Furthermore, the reports detailed the causes and methods of the incident, such as "Inside the car, items suggesting an extreme choice, along with a liquor bottle, were found" and "After receiving the report, the police dispatched to the scene found Lee collapsed in the SUV" (TV Chosun News, Article 57, December 27).

Finding 2: Disclosure of Sensitive Personal Notes (Will)

The analysis of 14 news articles on the death of Lee Sun Kyun found that 3 articles violated the journalistic ethical guideline Article 3, Reporting Rules, Point 6, Prohibition of Sensational Reporting and Point 8, Caution when reporting on suicide (see Appendix A), with 4 coded segments exposing the late actor's note left for his family and colleagues. Examples include: Online news articles of MBC News, "He left a note to his family apologizing, saying 'I'm sorry'" (Article 47, 2023, December 28); "Lee Sun-gyun left a note for Jeon Hye-jin saying, 'There is nothing we can do,' and 'I think this is the only way'" (Article 49, 2023, December 28); and "It has been reported that in a memo-style letter to the representative of his agency, Hodu&U Entertainment, late actor Lee Sun-kyun mentioned the burden of advertising and movie cancellation fees, expressing apologies. TV Chosun reported that Lee Sun-kyun's canceled movie contracts and advertising cancellation fees due to the drug investigation are estimated to be in the range of 10 billion won" (Article 49, 2023, December 28). These instances are considered unethical journalism practices because they sensationalized the act of suicide and exposed the personal and sensitive contents of the suicide note, which could also potentially stimulate the public.

5.2. Result of Analysis 2

Analysis 2 scrutinized the ethical dimensions of South Korean online media coverage of the Lee Sun Kyun scandal, specifically exploring how visual elements in news reporting, such as images, graphic designs, and videos, potentially violate ethical standards in journalism. The analysis of 57 online articles revealed significant ethical distortions, such as privacy invasion and sensationalism of crime related news as well as a suicide by visualization.

5.2.1. Privacy Invasion

This section interprets the findings related to Sub-Research Question 2.1: In what ways do visual elements in news reporting infringe upon personal privacy boundaries in the coverage of the Lee Sun Kyun scandal?

Finding 1. Invasion of Privacy

The analysis identified 23 instances across 9 news articles that violated Article 12, Privacy Protection, Point 3 (see Appendix A) out of a total of 57 articles. These violations encompassed filming, reporting, and covering aspects of the late actor Lee Sun Kyun's private life. Specifically, these breaches included the use of photographs from Lee Sun Kyun and his wife's wedding (see Figure 5, Appendix B), reports on the actor's car at the site of his suicide (see Figures 62-69, Appendix B), coverage of CCTV footage capturing his final moments as he headed to the park (see Figures B70 and B71, Appendix B), and documentation of private farewell areas (see Figures B52-B59, Appendix B).

In terms of the suspect's privacy, Article 7, Crime Reporting and Respect for Human Rights, Point 2 (see Appendix A), was also assessed in 17 instances across 15 articles. The findings attempted to justify these intrusions under the banner of public interest due to the suspect's prominence. However, as discussed in Chapter 4, exceptions outlined in ethical codes for public figures do not serve as adequate justification. Therefore, the methods used in news articles, such as filming interrogations at the police office before and after investigations, and surreptitiously filming from behind while the suspect was at the police office (see Figure B48, B49, B50, B67, and B72), underscore how journalists violated ethical standards by disregarding the suspect's right to privacy.

Regarding secret filming, Article 2, Reporting Rules, Point 5 (see Appendix A), was found violated due to methods such as secret filming employed in journalism in 4 news articles, with 6 instances. For example, KBS News indirectly reported on images captured from a covert position by Webber, S. (2023, December 29), in an article titled "Parasite star Lee Sun-kyun's anguished wife breaks down in tears during private funeral" published in the New York Post (Journalists at the funeral, p. 3) (see Figure B73, Appendix B). This instance exemplifies how journalists at the funeral utilized secretive filming techniques, thereby compromising ethical standards regarding privacy and respectful reporting.

5.2.2. Sensationalism

This section interprets the findings related to Sub-Research Question 2.1: How do visual elements contribute to sensationalism in the coverage of the Lee Sun Kyun scandal, and what ethical implications arise from these practices?

Finding 1. Misleading Visual Representations

Article 10, Editorial Guidelines, Point 5 (Publishing Related Photos) (see Appendix A), was violated through the use of press photos that did not directly relate to the substantive content of the articles, totaling 21 visual elements. The ethical guideline stipulates that when using indirectly related photos, this should be clearly disclosed. However, these articles included misleading photos and edited images that misrepresented the news content.

Firstly, screenshots from a shaman's video were accompanied by subtitles predicting the late actor's future downfall, portraying Lee Sun Kyun as handcuffed and losing his fame (see Figure B2 and Figure B3, Appendix B). Reporting on such unfactual sources with edited images of Lee Sun Kyun could lead to biased criticism and misinform the public about the unconfirmed criminal case.

Secondly, in this analysis, the use of photo editing and graphic designs, such as placing male and female unknown figures together with question marks, suggests a narrative implying a private relationship between Lee Sun Kyun and the entertainment establishment manager, Mrs. A (see Figure B4, B31, B33, B34, B47, Appendix B).

Thirdly, despite Lee Sun Kyun's drug allegations not being confirmed, and both tests returning negative results, video news accompanying online articles depicted certain types of drugs and methods of drug usage. For instance, they showed white powder (representing cocaine), green grass (representing marijuana), injections, and other graphic representations of illegal drug buying and selling procedures. These visualizations have the potential to misinform the public and prejudice the suspect before any court judgment or police investigation (see Figure B6, B8, B14, B15, B23, B40 – B46, in Appendix B).

Finding 2. Sensational and Emotional Representations

Thirty-three segments were coded under the category of "sensationalizing and emotionalizing" across 20 articles, which violated ethical guideline Article 3, Reporting Rules,

Point 6 (see Appendix A). These instances involved using sensational or provocative expressions when reporting on illegal or unethical acts, such as crime. For example, zooming in on the suspect's facial expressions and hands upon arrival at the police investigation (see Figures B27, B30, B32, B37, and B38, Appendix B).

Additionally, Article 10, Editorial Guidelines, Point 5 (see Appendix A), was violated by using photos and other visualizations that did not directly relate to the substantive content of the article. For instance, photos of Lee Sun Kyun's wife taken during her film shootings were used to attract attention, despite being irrelevant to the context (see Figure B1, B5, B9, and B10, Appendix B). Similar irrelevant visuals were used for other public figures involved in drug allegations (see Figure B12 and B39, Appendix B).

Furthermore, emotional expressions were employed, such as reporting on the grieving reactions of public figures, including the late actor's wife and children, with their faces blurred but still identifiable. Filming of all grieving relatives and colleagues was also done (see Figure B57-B59 and B72, Appendix B). Additionally, there was inappropriate editing of photos showing the sobbing wife alongside the late actor's farewell portrait (see Figure B59, Appendix B).

Finding 3. Unauthorized Use of visual Materials

Violation of Article 2, Reporting Rules, Point 2 (see Appendix A), occurred in only two instances across two articles out of 57, but these instances are noteworthy.

One instance involved the unauthorized exposure of screenshots showing messages exchanged between the entertainment establishment manager and the blackmailer, which mentioned Lee Sun Kyun's name and implicated him in drug consumption. These screenshots were published in an online news article by MBC News (2023, November 23), under the title "Lee Sun-kyun Drug Scandal... Exclusive Acquisition of Chat and Call Contents with Female Manager & Hacker (True Story Investigation Team)." The screenshots were edited and juxtaposed with other photos. (see Figure B36, Appendix B)

The second unauthorized use of material involved CCTV footage showing Lee Sun Kyun driving to the park where he committed suicide. (see Figure B70 - B71, Appendix B).

Chapter 6. Discussion

6.1. Interpretations of Key Findings

This study, conducted in two analytical sections—textual elements and visual elements—examined the ethical dimensions of South Korean online media coverage of the Lee Sun Kyun scandal, focusing on the extent to which journalistic language and visual representation deviated from ethical standards. Ethical standards, as referred to in this study, mean the Guidelines for Newspaper Ethics of South Korea because the study materials comprised South Korean national online news articles. Standardizing by national/local ethics codes is more appropriate than using international standards, considering cultural and societal differences; in other words, it validates the examination itself. According to the Korea Newspaper Association (2021), South Korean journalists adopt and pledge to comply with the Guidelines for Newspaper Ethics. These guidelines are intended to be the rule of the Korea Newspaper Ethics Committee, specifically implementing the Code of Newspaper Ethics adopted by the Korea Newspaper Association, the Korea Newspaper Broadcasting Editors' Association, and the Journalists Association of Korea (see Appendix A).

Through the analysis of 57 online articles, several significant ethical distortions were identified. The investigation into textual elements revealed pervasive privacy invasions. Unauthorized search and utilization of personal data were common, with articles frequently delving into the private lives of public figures like Lee Sun Kyun. Additionally, the media disclosed information about the suspect's family members, further breaching ethical standards.

Sensationalism was another major issue. Articles often featured misleading and exaggerated titles designed to attract attention rather than convey accurate information. Unrelated details were included to add sensational value, while the use of overly dramatic language aimed to evoke strong emotional reactions from readers. This sensational content was also retransmitted across various platforms, amplifying the ethical breaches.

Biased reporting emerged as a significant problem. Many articles contained unconfirmed information, leading to potential misinformation. The reports were often written with a biased perspective, selectively presenting information to support specific viewpoints. This biased criticism lacked objectivity and fairness, undermining journalistic integrity.

Furthermore, the coverage of suicide incidents was particularly unethical. Reports provided excessive details about the suicides and disclosed sensitive personal notes, such as wills, violating ethical guidelines and respecting the individuals' privacy.

The analysis of visual elements showed similar ethical violations. There were instances of unauthorized filming and coverage of Lee Sun Kyun's private life, as well as invasions of the suspect's privacy without consent. Secret and uninvited filming was also noted, further compromising ethical standards.

Sensationalism in visual content was prevalent. Misleading visual representations and sensational, emotional imagery were used to enhance the dramatic effect of the news. Unauthorized use of visual materials, including images and videos, was frequent, infringing on copyrights and ethical norms.

In interpreting these findings, it becomes evident that they both support and challenge existing theories of ethical journalism. They align with established literature that emphasizes the importance of respecting privacy, avoiding sensationalism, and ensuring accuracy in reporting. However, the extent and frequency of these ethical breaches underscore the need for heightened vigilance and adherence to ethical guidelines, particularly in the digital age where information spreads rapidly and can have far-reaching consequences.

Practically, these findings call for improved training and enforcement of ethical standards among journalists and media organizations in South Korea. There is a clear need for robust mechanisms to monitor and address ethical violations, including stricter adherence to guidelines on privacy protection, accuracy in reporting, and responsible use of visual content. Such measures are crucial not only for upholding journalistic integrity but also for maintaining public trust in media institutions.

In conclusion, this study contributes new insights into the ethical challenges faced by South Korean online media in their coverage of sensitive issues involving public figures. It highlights the complexities of balancing public interest with ethical responsibilities and underscores the importance of continuous research and dialogue on journalistic ethics, both within South Korea and in comparison with international standards. Future research should further explore cultural

contexts and comparative ethical standards to foster a deeper understanding of these issues across different societies and media landscapes.

6.2. Key aspect for implication - “Public interest”

It is important to note that all these key findings were reached without measuring or taking into account the late actor's societal impact, his role as a public figure, or the cultural expectations associated with prominent figures within the South Korean cultural context. However, for interpreting the results of this research, it is crucial to understand the terms "public interest" and "public figure" because many ethical guidelines or codes justify certain ethical distortions in journalism using phrases such as “except when necessary for public interest” (see Article 2, Point 2), “unless it is unavoidable for the public interest” (see Article 5, Point 4), “considering the public interest to the fullest extent possible” (see Article 7, Point 2), “unless it is absolutely necessary for the public interest” (see Article 12), and “except when necessary for public interest” (see Article 12, Point 3, Appendix A). This means that if these factors were taken into account and it was determined that the reporting served the public interest, some of the findings regarding the reporting on a prominent figure's scandal could be justified as not ethical distortions.

Furthermore, for clarification and to avoid misunderstanding of the terms, Chapter 2 highlighted how "public interest" is defined by the South Korean Newspaper Code of Ethics. It outlines conditions considered as public interest, such as cases involving National Security, Public Safety, Exposure of Crime, and Prevention of Misleading the Public. The latter aspect is particularly relevant to the case of this study, describing situations where it is necessary to prevent the public from being misled by the assertions or actions of individuals or groups (Korea Press Ethics Commission, 2021).

The argument that arose during this study questions whether allegations of drug use by a prominent individual, especially when unconfirmed and during the early stages of investigation, constitute newsworthy information that genuinely informs and protects the public from potential harm. This inquiry leads to the broader question of whether the private life of a famous A-class actor in South Korea falls under any of these definitions of "public interest." According to Lee, the Korean Law on defamation does have a clause that exempts punishment if the disclosure is for the public interest. In Korea, public figures such as entertainers, politicians, and

businesspeople are typically recognized as serving the public interest. As stated by a lawyer in SEOUL | Lee & Law, 2024: “The former movie actress involved in the blackmail case of Lee Sun Kyun had appeared in a few films in the past but was relatively unknown. Therefore, it is difficult to consider her a widely recognized public figure and publish her identity.”

Essentially, the study does not definitively answer the question of whether ethical distortions are justifiable in the case of Lee Sun Kyun as a public figure. This was also not the aim of the study. Instead, its focus was solely on discovering how and to what extent ethical codes were violated in online articles.

Therefore, as a suggestion for further study, it would be beneficial to conduct research that delves deeper into the definition of "public interest," examines cultural contexts that employed in the journalistic ethic codes.

6.3. Limitations

In the analysis of textual elements, a significant limitation was encountered in translation. It is crucial to note that Korean is not the researcher's native language. Therefore, all articles were translated from Korean into German, English, Mongolian, and also utilized AI translation tools. This approach may have limited the ability to fully capture and express the implicit cultural context embedded in certain word choices or sentence structures. Linguistic nuances and cultural subtleties inherent in the original texts might not have been fully taken into account and analyzed.

For the analysis of visual elements, several limitations were encountered. It was challenging to assess the ethical implications of edited images in online articles, where separate photos were combined and overlaid with sensational captions. This made it difficult to determine if such practices violated ethical codes, such as Article 10, Section 6 (Prohibition of Manipulating Photos and Videos), which stipulates that the substantive content of news photos or videos should not be altered through deletion, addition, or modification without disclosure. While minimal editing for technical convenience is permissible, the lack of clear guidelines on what constitutes acceptable editing practices posed risks and limitations to the study's measurement of ethical distortions. This could potentially bias the research findings.

Most of the online news articles analyzed in this study included embedded video news rather than static images or photos. This is due to the fact that the news media organizations

under study operate as multimedia entities, encompassing TV, newspaper, and online platforms. However, this posed a limitation as the analysis focused solely on the visual elements presented within these videos, rather than the entirety of their content. This approach omitted consideration of synchronization, spoken words, background music, and other contextual elements, which are integral to fully assessing any potential violations of journalistic ethics in the videos. Thus, the study's findings regarding ethical breaches may not encompass the complete range of factors that could impact journalistic integrity in multimedia reporting.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

This thesis has undertaken a comprehensive examination of the ethical dimensions surrounding media reporting on the Lee Sun Kyun scandal within South Korean online media. The investigation has illuminated significant ethical breaches, particularly in textual and visual representations, highlighting pervasive sensationalism, privacy invasions, and biased reporting practices. These findings underscore the urgent need for enhanced ethical standards in journalism to uphold integrity and accountability in media reporting.

The study's analysis of 57 online articles revealed widespread ethical distortions in textual elements, including unauthorized use of personal data, sensationalized headlines, and biased perspectives. These breaches not only compromised the privacy rights of individuals but also misled the public with sensational and emotionally charged narratives. Similarly, the scrutiny of visual elements exposed unethical practices such as unauthorized filming and misleading visual representations, further exacerbating the sensationalism prevalent in media coverage.

Moreover, the research emphasized the critical role of ethical guidelines, such as those outlined by the Korea Press Ethics Commission, in mitigating these issues. However, challenges remain in the implementation of stricter ethical standards within the media industry, compounded by commercial pressures and insufficient training in ethical journalism.

Proposed Solutions

To address these challenges effectively, several targeted solutions are proposed:

1. **Strengthening Ethical Frameworks:** Media organizations should undertake regular audits and establish robust accountability measures to ensure adherence to ethical guidelines. This could involve creating internal committees dedicated to ethical oversight and implementing transparency in editorial decision-making processes.
2. **Enhanced Training Programs:** Mandatory training programs on media ethics should be developed for journalists and media professionals. These programs should focus on practical scenarios and case studies to enhance ethical decision-making skills and foster a culture of responsibility within newsrooms.

3. **Regulatory Enhancements:** Regulatory bodies like the Korea Press Ethics Commission should enhance their oversight capabilities and enforcement mechanisms. This could include stricter penalties for ethical violations and more proactive monitoring of media practices to deter sensationalism and privacy infringements.
4. **Promoting Ethical Journalism:** Media organizations should incentivize and recognize exemplary ethical journalism. Awards and recognition programs could highlight responsible reporting practices, encouraging a shift towards ethical standards in media content production.
5. **Public Education Initiatives:** Initiatives should be launched to educate the public about media literacy and ethical standards in journalism. This could involve collaborations between media outlets, educational institutions, and community organizations to raise awareness about the impacts of sensationalism and privacy breaches.

Areas for Further Research

Building on this thesis, future research could explore the following areas to deepen our understanding of ethical challenges in media reporting:

6. **Cultural Contexts:** Investigate how cultural norms and societal expectations influence ethical standards in journalism across different countries and regions. This comparative analysis could provide insights into the universality versus specificity of ethical guidelines.
7. **Impact of Technology:** Examine the role of emerging technologies, such as AI-driven content creation and social media platforms, in shaping ethical dilemmas for modern journalism. How can ethical guidelines adapt to the rapid pace of technological advancement?
8. **Long-Term Effects on Public Trust:** Conduct longitudinal studies to assess the long-term effects of unethical media practices on public trust in journalism and democratic institutions. This could involve surveys and focus groups to gauge public perceptions over time.
9. **Legal and Regulatory Reforms:** Analyze the effectiveness of legal frameworks and regulatory reforms in different jurisdictions aimed at promoting ethical journalism. Case studies could highlight successful strategies and areas needing improvement.

10. Journalistic Training Innovations: Explore innovative approaches to integrating ethical education into journalism curricula and professional development programs. How can immersive simulations and real-time feedback enhance ethical decision-making skills among future journalists?

In conclusion, this study provides a critical analysis of ethical challenges in South Korean media reporting and proposes actionable solutions to foster responsible journalism. By addressing these issues and exploring new avenues for research, stakeholders can work towards maintaining the integrity and credibility of the media in the digital age.

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Appendix A

“Practical Guidelines for Journalistic Ethics”

(translated from Korean)

In order to specifically implement the Code of Newspaper Ethics adopted by the Korea Newspaper Association, the Korea Newspaper Broadcasting Editors' Association, the Journalists Association of Korea, South Korean journalists adopt and pledge to comply with the following Guidelines for Newspaper Ethics.

In addition, it is determined to make this Guidelines for the Ethical Practice of Newspapers as the rule of the Korea Newspaper Ethics Committee.

Article 1 Freedom, responsibility and independence of the press

Journalists must reject undue suppression and pressure and protect editorial freedom and independence in order to realize free and responsible journalism.

- ① (Freedom from political power) Undue pressure and favors exerted on the media by political powers such as the regime, political parties, and political factions must be rejected.
- ② (Independence from social and economic forces) It must refuse unfair pressure from social forces such as groups and sects, or economic forces such as businesses, or financial temptations or requests.
- ③ (Social responsibility) We must do our best to protect individual rights and actively deal with public issues in society in order to form diverse public opinions and improve public welfare.
- ④ (Prohibition of discrimination and prejudice) Reports that incite conflict or hatred between regions, classes, genders, races, and religions must not be published, and individuals or groups must not be discriminated against on this basis.

⑤ (Protection of the socially underprivileged/ disadvantaged) The rights of the socially disadvantaged, such as the disabled, the elderly, and sexual minorities, shall be actively protected, and prejudice against them shall not be taken.

Article 2 Reporting Rules

Journalists shall observe the necessary courtesy when contacting individuals or organizations for coverage and shall not use unethical or illegal methods. They should not threaten or harass their reporters.

① (Impersonation and Disguise Prohibition) Journalists must not conduct interviews by impersonating or disguising their identity.

② (Unauthorized Use of Materials Prohibited) Content such as documents, data, photographs, videos, illustrations, music, internet postings, and comments must not be searched for or used without the consent of the owner or administrator, except when necessary for public interest.

③ (Disaster and Accident Reporting) When covering disasters or accidents, journalists must not infringe upon human dignity or hinder the treatment of victims. Respect must be shown to the victims, their families, and those affected. Journalists should also avoid causing disruptions to relief and rescue operations.

④ (Reporting using phones and digital devices) When reporting on a phone or digital device rather than face-to-face with a reporter, you must reveal your identity and be courteous to the other person.

⑤ (Prohibition of Wiretapping and Secret Filming) Journalism through methods such as wiretapping or secret filming is prohibited.

⑥ (Prohibition of Unfair Financial Offers) Journalists must not engage in unethical practices such as offering money or other financial incentives to obtain information or conduct interviews.

Article 3 Reporting Rules

When writing news articles (including explanatory articles), journalists must, in principle, faithfully convey the entire story of the issue and accurately check the source and content. In addition, the truth must be actively tracked and reported to realize social justice and public interest.

① (Distinction between facts and opinions in news articles) News articles must be written with a clear distinction between facts and opinions. Additionally, news articles should not be selected or written based on bias or selfish motives.

② (Fair reporting) When reporting a contested case, it does not report one side's argument in a biased way. When reporting based on public opinion polls, etc., the grounds for confirming the credibility of the survey should be clearly stated, and statistics should not be distorted.

③ (Opportunity for Rebuttal) When news articles contain criticism or disparagement of individuals or organizations, the other party must be given an opportunity to provide a rebuttal, and their response should be reflected in the coverage.

④ (Principle of specifying unconfirmed reports) When inevitably reporting the fact that the source is unclear or unconfirmed, the reasons therefor shall be clearly stated.

⑤ (Press release verification) In principle, oral presentations and press releases provided by reporters are reported after verifying the facts.

⑥ (Prohibition of sensational reporting) When reporting illegal or unethical acts such as crime, violence, or animal abuse, sensational or provocative expressions must not be used, and they must not be treated in a vulgar manner.

⑦ (Careful reporting of disasters) When reporting disasters or large-scale events, avoid reporting based on interest, and do not use expressions that are provocative or may cause unnecessary fear. Particular care must be taken to avoid violating the human rights, such as reputation or privacy, of victims of disasters and accidents, victims, and their families.

⑧ (Caution when reporting on suicide) Reporting on suicide must be cautious, considering its impact on society. Reports that stimulate public curiosity by specifically describing the causes and methods of suicide should not be published. In particular, avoid using the word ‘suicide’ in the headline.

⑨ (Reporting on the facts of the suspect / Reporting on Suspected Crime) Efforts should be made to confirm whether the facts of the suspect provided by investigative agencies such as the police or prosecutors are true. Additionally, we must do our best to give the suspect an opportunity to explain.

⑩ (Use of standard language) When writing press articles, the rule is to use standard language and avoid causing discomfort to readers by using vulgar slang.

Article 4 Judicial Reporting Rules

Journalists must not conduct coverage, reporting, or commentary that unfairly undermines the independence of judicial institutions.

① (Prohibition of Unfair Influence on Trials) Journalism, reporting, or commentary that unfairly influences trials must not be conducted.

② (Prohibition of prior reporting of judgments, etc.) Judgments, decisions, and other judicial documents must not be reported or commented on before the judgment or decision. However, an exception is made when a relevant reporter provides information contained in judicial documents.

Article 5 Identifying and protecting reporters

When writing a news article, journalists must disclose the source or source of the report, and must not report under the pretense of an abstract or general source.

① (Protection of reporters) If the reporter's safety is at risk or there is a risk of being unfairly disadvantaged, the reporter's identity must not be revealed.

② (Identification of Sources and Anonymous Conditions) When writing news articles, sources should generally not be represented anonymously or under pseudonyms. However, in cases where it is unavoidable for the public interest or when the value of the report takes precedence, requests for anonymity from sources may be accepted. Efforts should be made to disclose the affiliations and general positions of the sources.

③ (Prohibition of slandering third parties and anonymous reporting) In principle, requests for anonymity should not be accepted when criticizing, slandering, or attacking a third party based on unspecified sources or one-sided claims provided by the reporter.

④ (Non-Disclosure Agreement with Sources) (Geheimhaltungsvereinbarung mit Quellen) When agreeing not to report the identity or content of a source, journalists must refrain from reporting unless it is unavoidable for the public interest.

Article 6 Deadline for suspension of reporting /postponed reporting

Journalists must determine whether or not to accept the reporting period requested by the news source by determining whether it is reasonable and valid.

Journalists must assess whether the deadline requested by the source for postponed reporting is reasonable and valid before deciding whether to accept it or not.

① (Prohibition of Extension of Postponed Reporting Deadline) Postponed reporting deadlines should not be arbitrarily established or extended through voluntary agreements.

② (Loss of effect of time limit for suspension of reporting) The time limit for suspension of reporting loses its effect if circumstances that violate the purpose for which it was established occur.

Article 7 Crime reporting and respect for human rights

Journalists must respect the human rights of suspects and defendants in criminal cases before they are confirmed guilty. In particular, the human rights of victims and their families unrelated to the crime must be protected.

① (Respect for the honor of suspects and defendants) The honor and personal rights of suspects and defendants in criminal cases must be respected, keeping in mind that they are presumed innocent.

② (Careful Filming of Suspects, Defendants, Witnesses, etc.) When filming suspects, defendants, witnesses, or other individuals involved in criminal cases, journalists must respect their right to privacy while also considering the public interest to the fullest extent possible.

③ (Protection of families unrelated to crime) When reporting a criminal case, the identity of family members unrelated to the crime should not be revealed.

④ (Prevention of secondary damage from sexual crimes, etc.) When reporting on sexual crime cases, etc., care must be taken to prevent secondary damage to the victim, family, and people around them.

⑤ (Protection of identity of minor suspect) If the suspect or defendant is a minor (under 18 years of age), name, photos, etc. must not reveal the identity.

Article 8 Reproduction, Transcription and citation of works

Media companies and journalists should not infringe on the copyright of others, and when transcribing or citing works, they should specify the source.

① (Attribution of News Sources) When reprinting wire service articles, the source must be disclosed, and minor details should not be altered to make it appear as one's own article.

② (Prohibition of Plagiarism of Other Media Reports) Plagiarizing reports and opinions from other media outlets is prohibited, and using substantive content without attribution is also not allowed. However, if there are multiple sources, they can be collectively cited.

③ (Prohibition of Plagiarism in Publications) The content of periodicals or publications must not be plagiarized, and when quoting excerpts, the source must be cited.

④ (Copyright protection of photos, videos, etc.) Copyrights of photos, videos, paintings, music, Internet posts and comments, etc. of individuals or organizations must be protected, and the source must be disclosed when used in reporting or criticism.

Article 9 Principles of criticism

Editorials and reviews should express opinions fairly and correctly based on facts, but should not lose balance and moderation, and should be especially wary of bias and distortion. In addition, criticism can freely express political positions and should strive to form diverse public opinion by accepting a wide range of public opinions on controversial issues.

① (Editorial Neutrality) emphasizes that editorials should reflect the ideological stance of the affiliated press, avoiding advocacy for the commercial interests of the press or specific political parties or groups. They must remain neutral and not represent the interests of religious sects.

② (Freedom of criticism) Comments such as editorials may freely express political positions, such as support for or opposition to a specific political party or person, as long as they do not violate positive/substantive law.

Article 10 Editorial Guidelines

Journalists should be free from internal and external pressures or constraints when editing newspapers, and they should edit independently according to publicly disclosed criteria.

① (Principle of the title) The title should represent the summary or core content of the article and should not exaggerate or distort the article content.

② (Editing changes prohibited) Removing an article or changing its size due to unfair demands from inside or outside the company, the layout, etc. must not be changed.

③ (Prohibition of Altering Contributions) External contributions should not be altered in substance without the consent of the contributor.

④ (Correction of article) When an error in a news article is discovered or a request for correction is received, the contents must be confirmed and published quickly and clearly.

⑤ (Publishing related photos) Press photos must be directly related to the substantive content of the article. However, when photos indirectly related to the article are used, the fact must be disclosed.

⑥ (Prohibition of Manipulating Photos and Videos) The substantive content of news photos or videos should not be altered by deleting, adding, or modifying them in any way. However, minimal editing techniques may be used for technical convenience in editing, but this fact must be disclosed.

⑦ (Distinction between articles and advertisements) Editing should be done so that readers can clearly distinguish between articles and advertisements. When placing an advertisement on the same page or space as an article, it must be displayed so that readers can clearly recognize it as an advertisement.

⑧ (Protection of user rights) Website operators must ensure maximum user participation and convenience, regularly inspect and manage content to ensure there are no errors, and be especially careful to prevent youth from being exposed to harmful materials.

⑨ (Prohibition of unfair retransmission) The same or similar articles shall not be repeatedly published for unfair purposes by changing the title and part of the article.

Article 11 Honor and Respect for Credibility

Journalists must refrain from reporting or expressing opinions that damage the reputation or credibility of individuals or organizations.

① (Prohibition of Defamation and Damage to Reputation or Credit) Individuals or organizations' rights to dignity, honor, and credit must not be undermined through misinformation, inaccurate reporting, distorted coverage, reports unrelated to the public interest, or vulgar expressions.

② (Respect for the Dignity of Subjects/ the honor of a lion) When reporting and expressing opinions, journalists must not unfairly damage the dignity of the subjects involved.

Article 12 Privacy protection

Journalists should refrain from reporting or expressing opinions on individuals' private lives unless it is absolutely necessary for the public interest.

① (Prohibition of Invasion of Privacy) Intrusion (Eingriff) into individuals' private lives without permission is prohibited.

② (Prohibition of Unauthorized Search of Personal Information) Searching or using personal information stored on digital devices without the consent of the owner or administrator is prohibited.

③ (Prohibition of Filming and Reporting on Privacy) Filming, reporting, or covering an individual's private life or property without consent is prohibited. However, exceptions can be made for public figures.

④ (Reporting on the private life of a public figure) Even when reporting or expressing opinions on the private lives of public figures for the public interest, caution should be exercised to avoid losing restraint. - must be careful not to lose moderation.

Article 13 Protection of youth and children

Journalists must strive to form sound personalities and cultivate emotions in youth and children, and in particular, must protect them from harmful environments that are obscene, violent, or decadent.

① (Reporting Involving Adolescents and Children) Contacting or filming/reporting on adolescents (under 19 years old) or children (under 13 years old) without the consent of their parents or guardians is prohibited.

② (Reporting on Crime and Protection of Adolescents, Children) In cases where adolescents or children, along with their families, are involved in a crime, the identities of the adolescents or children should not be disclosed.

③ (Protection from Harmful Environments) Journalists should be cautious not to glorify or excessively detail violence, obscenity, drug use, gambling, etc., in their reporting, to prevent adolescents and children from being exposed to harmful environments.

④ (Cooperation with Reporting Restrictions on Kidnapping) In cases where children or adolescents are kidnapped or abducted, cooperation should be provided to requests from investigative agencies or others for reporting restrictions to ensure safety.

Article 14 Prohibition of improper use of information

Journalists should not use information obtained during the reporting process for the benefit of themselves, their relatives, or associates, nor should they disclose it to other individuals or institutions.

① (Restriction on Reporting on Owned Stocks, etc.) Journalists should avoid reporting on stocks or digital currency transactions that could influence those owned by themselves, their relatives, or associates. The aim is to prevent conflicts of interest or biased reporting that may arise from personal financial interests.

② (Prohibition of Unfair Trading in Stocks, Real Estate, etc.) Information obtained through reporting or other journalistic activities should not be used for trading stocks, real estate, or any other form of personal gain.

Article 15 Dignity of journalists

Journalists should recognize that the press serves as a social institution and, as such, must uphold the dignity befitting a public entity.

① (Prohibition of Accepting Money or Gifts, and Solicitation) In relation to coverage, report, criticism, and editing, tangible and intangible economic benefits such as money and valuables, entertainment, etc. shall not be taken from interested parties and shall not be requested.

② (Prohibition of Exerting Unfair Group Influence) Journalists should not form or engage in groups or activities beyond joint reporting or professional collaboration for the purpose of friendship or professional mutual benefit. They should also refrain from exerting group influence on sources during reporting.

③ (Prohibition of Advertising or Sales Activities) Media outlets should not demand from journalists any unfair advertising or sales activities that could influence reporting or editing. Likewise, journalists should not accept such demands.

Article 16 Definition of public interest

In the Newspaper Code of Ethics, the following are included as necessary for the public interest:

① (National security, etc.) When it is unavoidable to ensure national security, maintain social order, and public welfare.

② (Public safety) Inevitable cases for the preservation of public health, safety and environment

③ (Exposure of Crime) When necessary to prevent antisocial crimes or significant unethical acts.

④ (Prevention of Misleading the Public) When necessary to prevent the public from being misled by the assertions or actions of individuals or groups.

The Korea Newspaper Association, the Korea Association of Newspapers and Broadcasting Editors, and the Korea Journalists Association approve and set the revised Newspaper Code of Ethics and Practice Guidelines as the guidelines.

Established on April 7, 1957

Completely revised on April 8, 1996

Partially revised on March 4, 2009

Partially revised on April 6, 2016

Partially revised on April 6, 2021

Korea Newspaper Association

Korean Newspaper and Broadcasting Editors Association

Korean Journalists Association

Appendix B

List of the analyzed Images of Analysis 2



Figure B1. MBC News. (2023, October 27) *“Jeon Hye-jin, shocked to the point of fainting after the report on Lee Sun-gyun’s drug and entertainment establishment. Hold on for her son.”*[Photograph of Lee Sun-kyun and his wife Jeon Hye-jin].



Figure B2. MBC News. (2023, October 23). Actor Lee Sun-kyun under police investigation for drug use allegations [Screenshot].

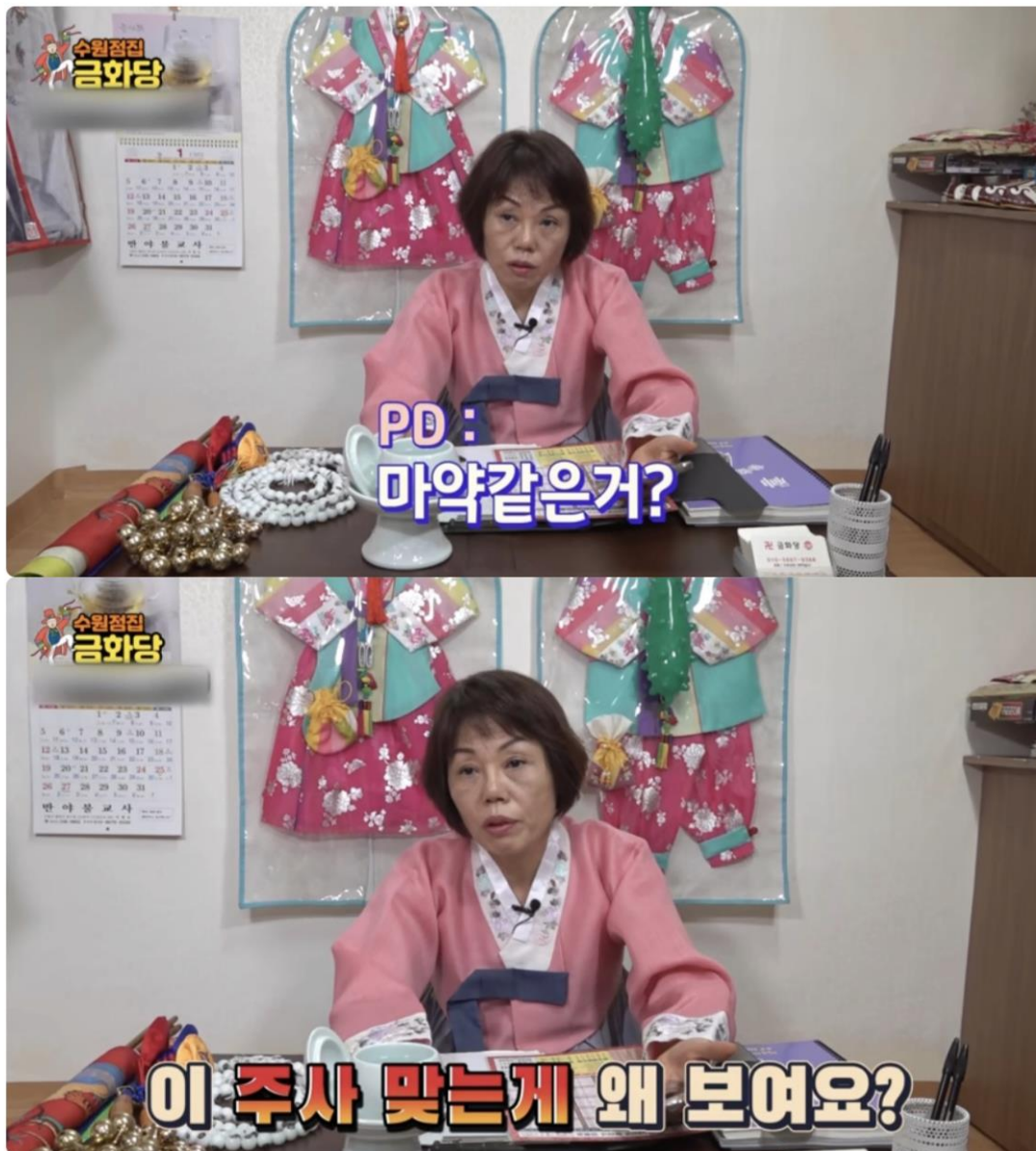


Figure B3. MBC News. (2023, October 23). Actor Lee Sun-kyun under police investigation for drug use allegations [Screenshot].



Figure B4. MBC News. (2023, April 25). “*There are more drug celebrities*” ... *What’s next for Seon-kyun Lee?* [Image of unknown two people].



Figure B5. MBC News. (2023, October 26). "Lee Sun-kyun's wife, Jeon Hye-jin's reaction to drug allegations? 'Shock to the point of fainting.'" [Photograph of Lee Sun-kyun's wedding].



Figure B6. KBS News. (2023, October 20.) "*Actor Lee Sun-kyun suspected of drug use... Namyang's maternal granddaughter Hwang Ha-na is also on the investigation line*" [Screenshot of Drugs, shown in video attached to the article].



Figure B7. KBS News. (2023, October 20). "Actor Lee Sun-kyun suspected of drug use... Namyang's maternal granddaughter Hwang Ha-na is also on the investigation line" [Screenshot of video attached to the article].

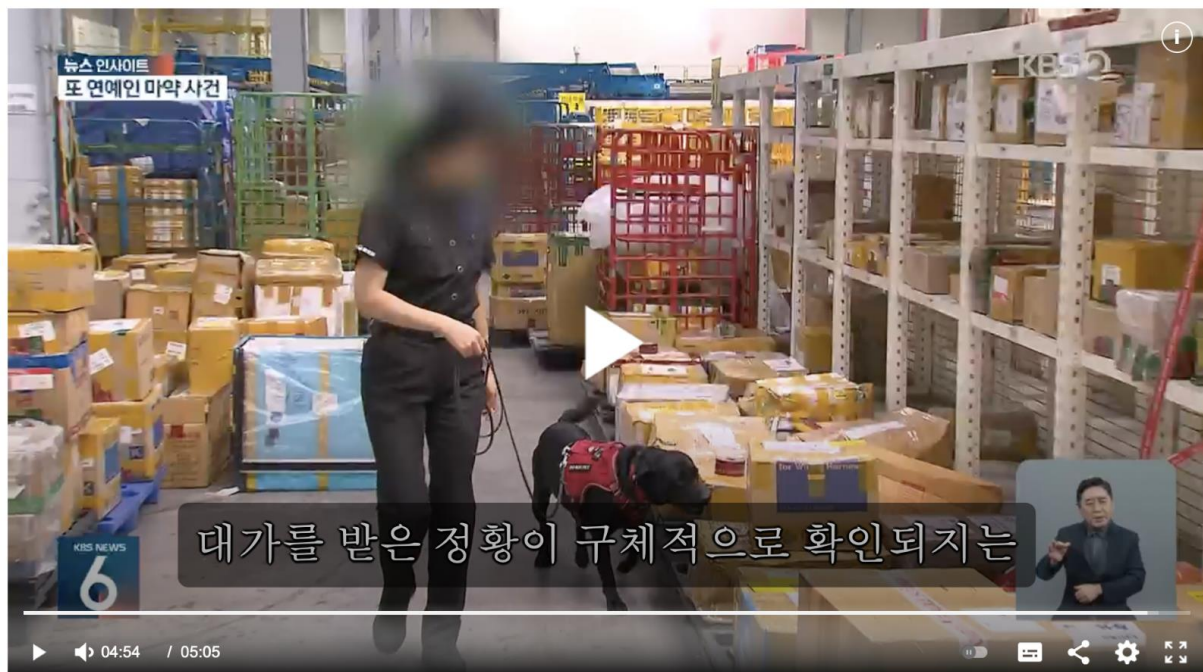


Figure B8. KBS News. (2023, October 23). [News Insight] Celebrity drug suspicions arise

again... Customs officials collusion investigation. [Screenshot of the video attached to the news article].



Figure B9. KBS News. (2023, October 23). "Lee Sun-kyun's 'Drug Investigation,' Advertisements and Movies He Appeared in 'In Full Swing.'" [Screenshot of actress Jeon Hye-jin, Lee Sun Kyun's wife]



Figure B10. KBS News. (2023, October 23). "Lee Sun-kyun's 'Drug Investigation,'
Advertisements and Movies He Appeared in 'In Full Swing.'" [Photograph of actress Jeon Hye-
jin, Lee Sun Kyun's wife]



Figure B11. KBS News. (2023, October 30) "Police speed up investigation of Lee Sun-kyun... Promoting emergency appraisal." [Screenshot of actor Lee Sun Kyun, at the police office]



Figure B12. KBS News. (2023, October 30) "Police speed up investigation of Lee Sun-kyun... Promoting emergency appraisal" [Screenshot of actor Yoo Ah-In, at the police office]



Figure B13. TV Chosun News, (2023, October 20) *"Police Investigate Actor Lee Sun-kyun for Drug Allegations; Also Question Chaebol Heirs and Convicted Drug Offenders."* [Screenshot of Incheon Metropolitan Police Agency].



Figure B14. TV Chosun News, (2023, October 20) *"Police Investigate Actor Lee Sun-kyun for Drug Allegations; Also Question Chaebol Heirs and Convicted Drug Offenders."* [Screenshot of a drug, which is shown during the TV news, which attached to the online article]



Figure B15. TV Chosun News, (2023, October 20) *"Police Investigate Actor Lee Sun-kyun for Drug Allegations; Also Question Chaebol Heirs and Convicted Drug Offenders."* [Screenshot of a drug, which is shown during the TV news, which attached to the online article].

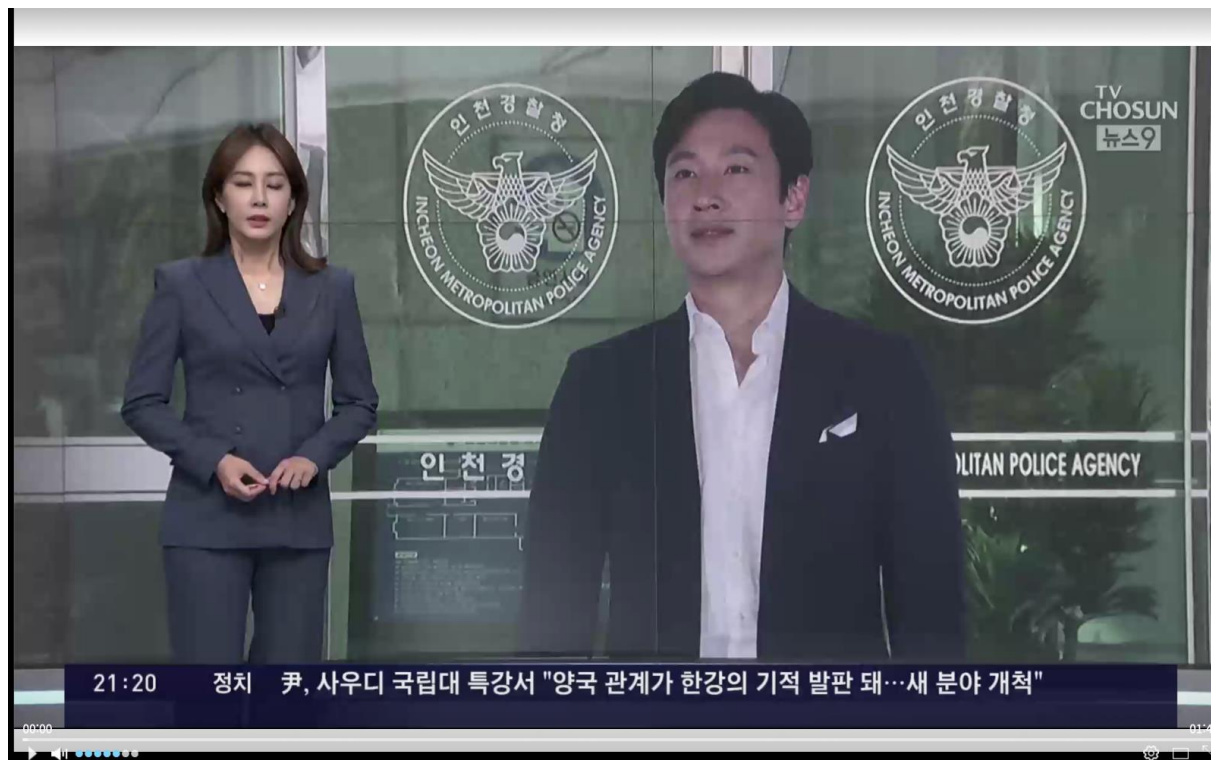


Figure B16. TV Chosun News. (2023, October 23). *'Drug Allegations' Actor Lee Sun-kyun Becomes Suspect; 'Unfamiliar with Chaebol Heir'*. [Screenshot from a TV news, which is attached to the online article. Image of Lee Sun Kyun with a background of a police agency building].

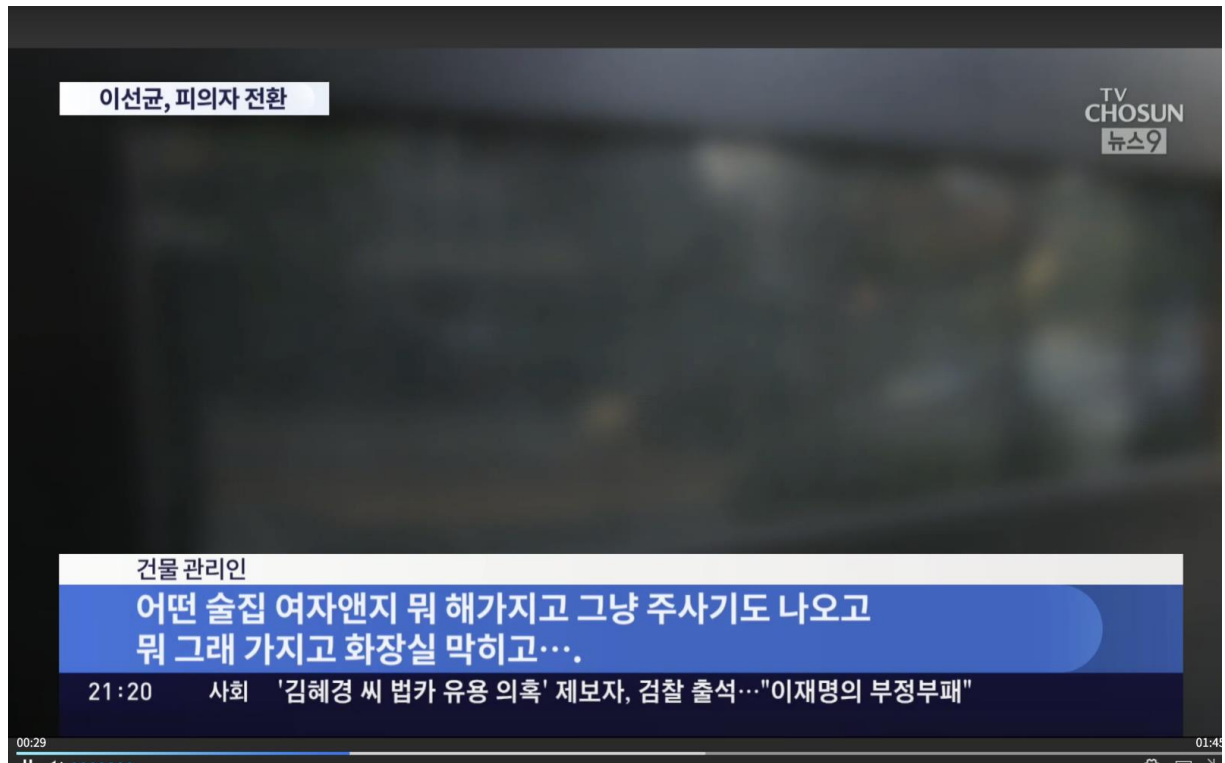


Figure B17. TV Chosun News. (2023, October 23). *'Drug Allegations' Actor Lee Sun-kyun Becomes Suspect; 'Unfamiliar with Chaebol Heir'*. [Screenshot from a TV news, which is attached to the online article. Blurred image of the entertainment establishment, where the involved manager, Mrs A works].

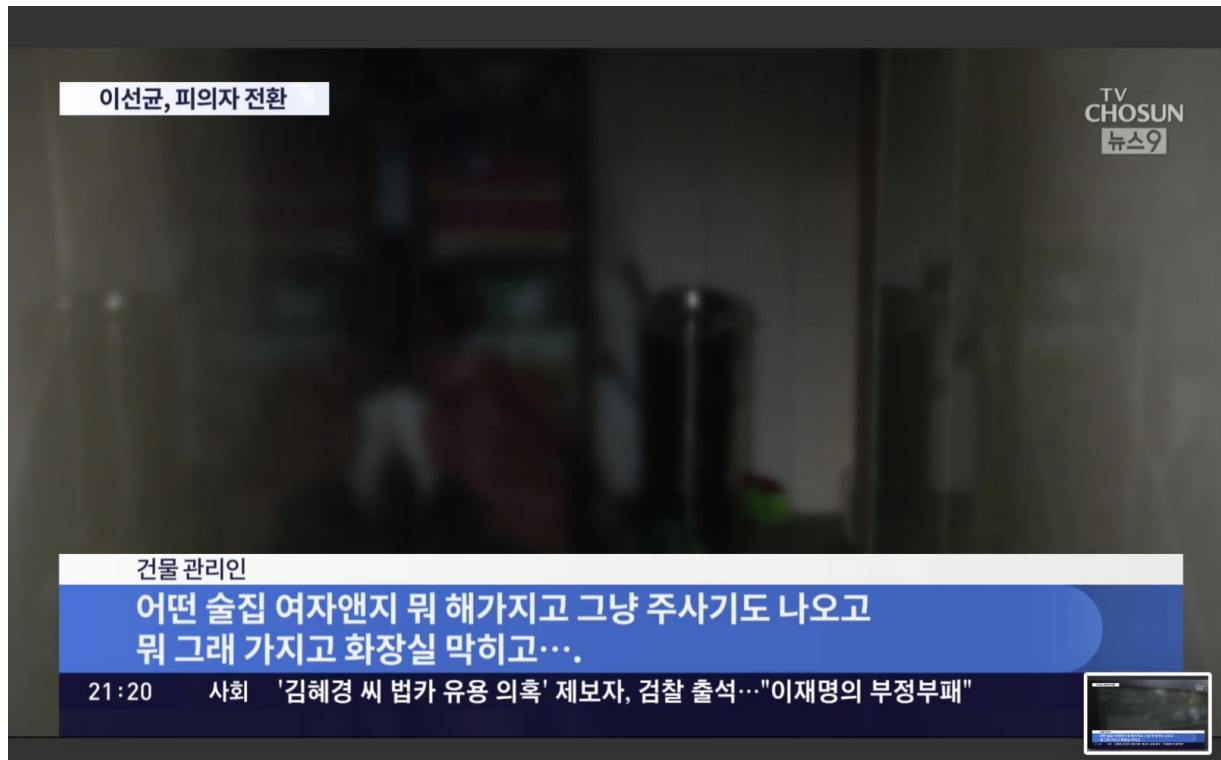


Figure B18. TV Chosun News. (2023, October 23). *'Drug Allegations' Actor Lee Sun-kyun Becomes Suspect; 'Unfamiliar with Chaebol Heir'*. [Screenshot from a TV news, which is attached to the online article. Blurred image of the entertainment establishment, where the involved manager, Mrs A works].

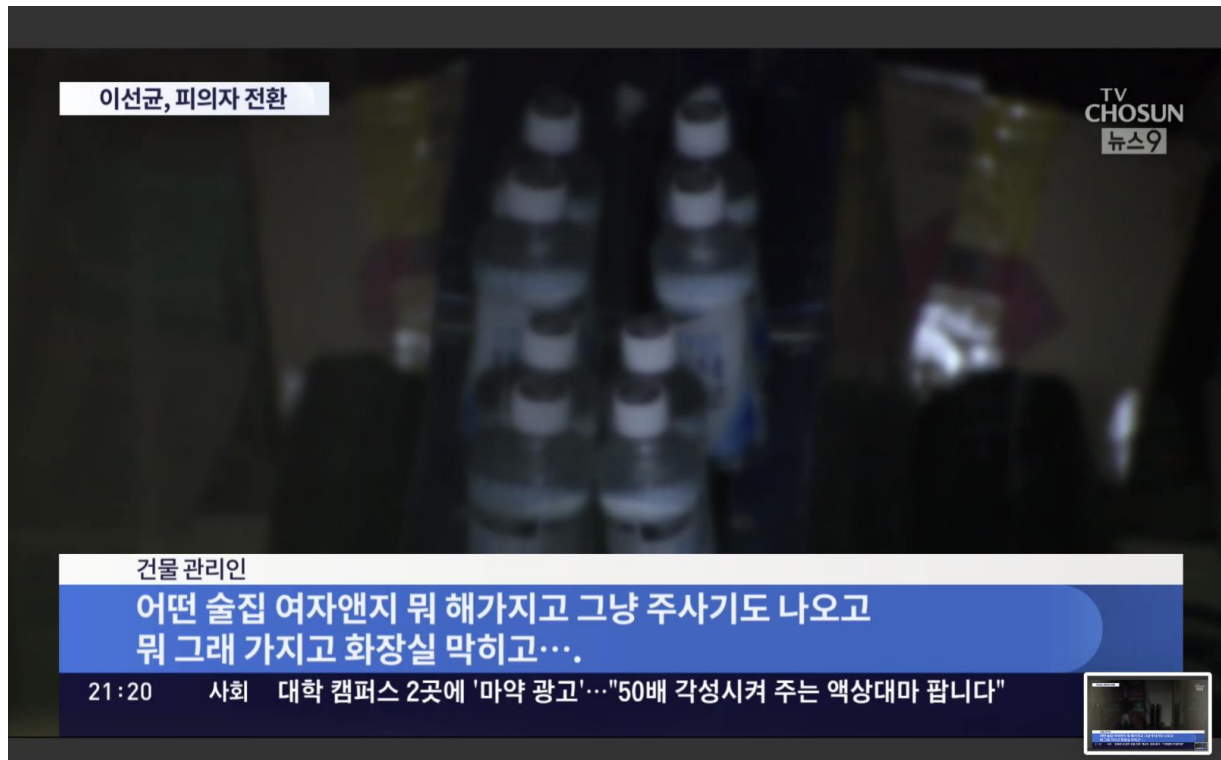


Figure B19. TV Chosun News. (2023, October 23). *'Drug Allegations' Actor Lee Sun-kyun Becomes Suspect; 'Unfamiliar with Chaebol Heir'*. [Screenshot from a TV news, which is attached to the online article. Blurred image of the entertainment establishment, where the involved manager, Mrs A works].

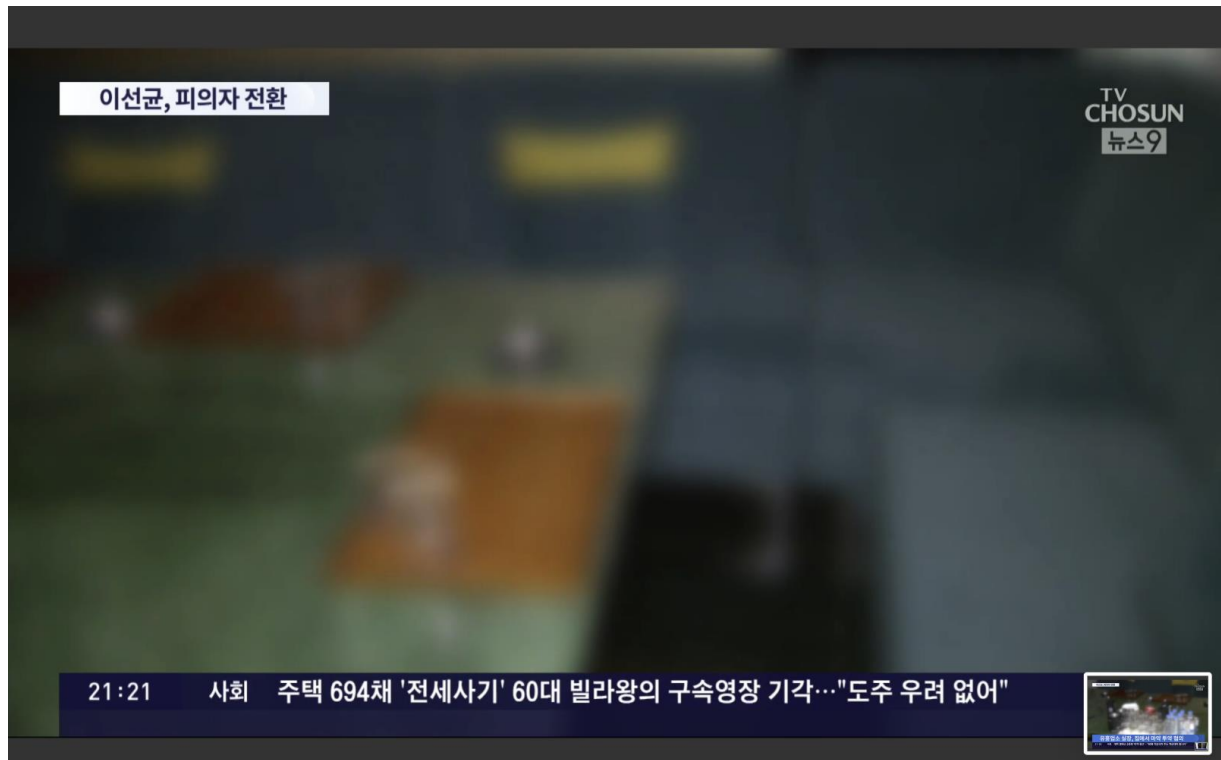


Figure B20. TV Chosun News. (2023, October 23). *'Drug Allegations' Actor Lee Sun-kyun Becomes Suspect; 'Unfamiliar with Chaebol Heir'*. [Screenshot from a TV news, which is attached to the online article. Blurred image of the entertainment establishment, where the involved manager, Mrs A works].



Figure B22. TV Chosun News. (2023, October 23). *'Drug Allegations' Actor Lee Sun-kyun Becomes Suspect; 'Unfamiliar with Chaebol Heir'*. [Screenshot from a TV news, which is attached to the online article. Blurred image of the entertainment establishment, where the involved manager, Mrs A works].



Figure B23. TV Chosun News. (2023, October 23). *'Drug Allegations' Actor Lee Sun-kyun Becomes Suspect; 'Unfamiliar with Chaebol Heir'*. [Screenshot from a TV News video, which was attached to the online article. The Image shows Lee Sun Kyun's picture with a background of drug images].

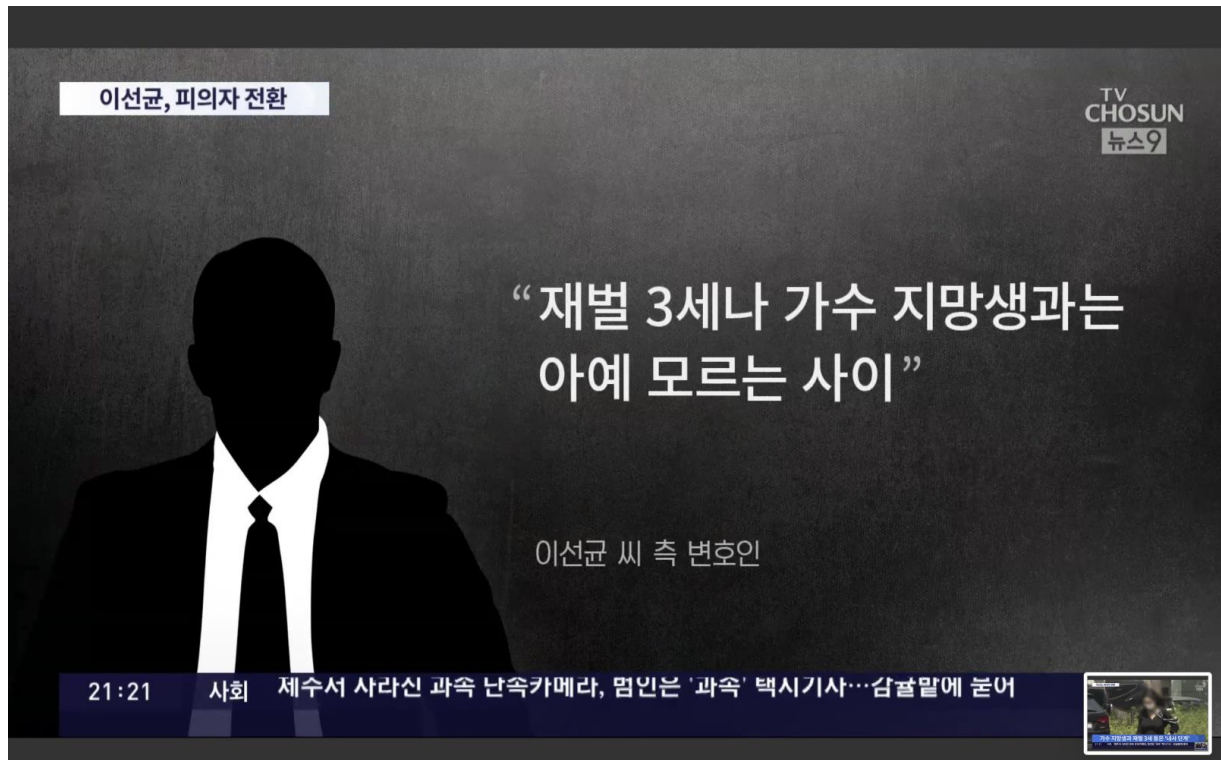


Figure B24. TV Chosun News. (2023, October 23). *'Drug Allegations' Actor Lee Sun-kyun Becomes Suspect; 'Unfamiliar with Chaebol Heir'*. [Image of an unknown human figure, representing Lee Sun Kyun].



Figure B25. TV Chosun News. (2023, October 23). *'Drug Allegations' Actor Lee Sun-kyun Becomes Suspect; 'Unfamiliar with Chaebol Heir'*. [Image of Lee Sun Kyun with a background of the police agency].



Figure B21. TV Chosun News. (2023, October 23). *'Drug Allegations' Actor Lee Sun-kyun Becomes Suspect; 'Unfamiliar with Chaebol Heir'*. [Screenshot from a TV news, which is attached to the online article. Blurred image of the entertainment establishment, where the involved manager, Mrs A works].



Figure B26.MBC News. (2023, November 4). *“Drug Allegations’ Lee Sun-kyun Reappears at Police Today: “Will Cooperate Sincerely in Investigation”* [Photograph of Lee Sun Kyun, at the arrival for the police investigation]



Figure B27. MBC News. (2023, November 4). *“Drug Allegations’ Lee Sun-kyun Reappears at Police Today: “Will Cooperate Sincerely in Investigation”* [Photograph of Lee Sun Kyun, at the arrival for the police investigation]



Figure B28. MBC News. (2023, November 4). *“Drug Allegations’ Lee Sun-kyun Reappears at Police Today: “Will Cooperate Sincerely in Investigation”* [Photograph of Lee Sun Kyun, at the arrival for the police investigation]



Figure B29. MBC News. (2023, November 4). *“Drug Allegations’ Lee Sun-kyun Reappears at Police Today: “Will Cooperate Sincerely in Investigation”* [Photograph of Lee Sun Kyun, at the arrival for the police investigation]



Figure B30. MBC News. (2023, November 4). *“Drug Allegations’ Lee Sun-kyun Reappears at Police Today: “Will Cooperate Sincerely in Investigation”* [Photograph of Lee Sun Kyun, at the arrival for the police investigation]



Figure B31. IMBC News. (2023, November 05). "Lee Sun-kyun 'Fooled by Nightclub Manager...Didn't Know It Was Drugs'" [Image of Lee Sun Kyun edited with a woman figure, representing the manager of entertainment establishment, who involved in this drug allegation]

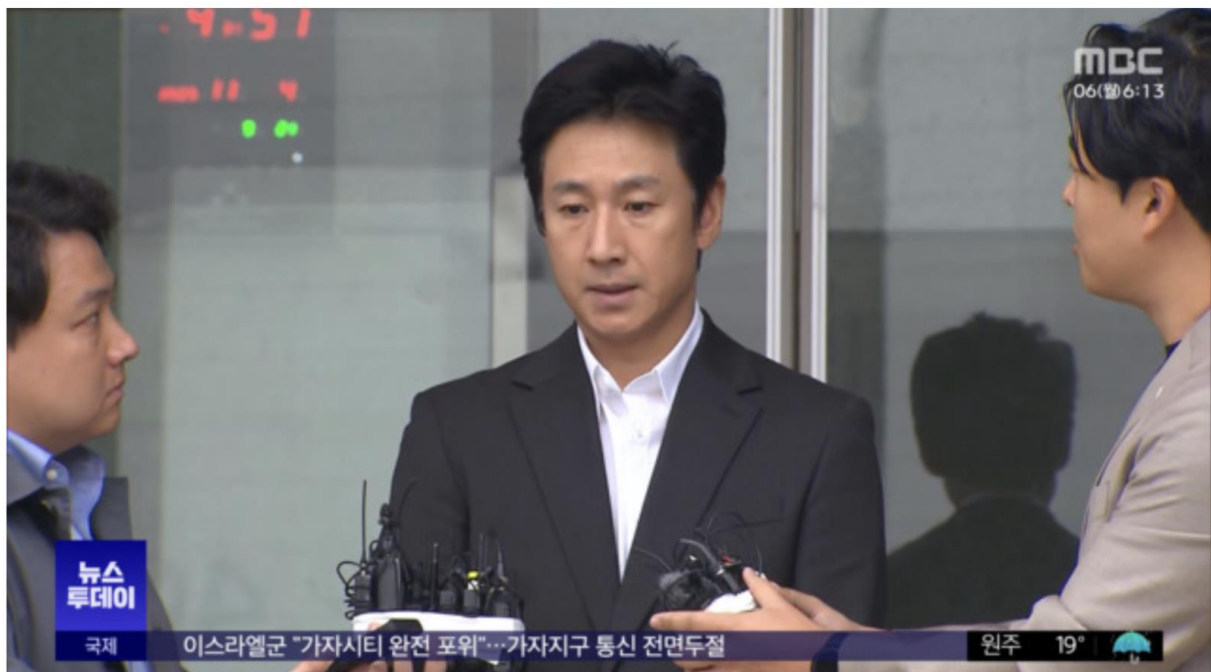


Figure B32. IMBC News. (2023, November 06). "Investigation on Illegal Gambling Businesses"

Summer Vacations Plan." [Photograph of Lee Sun Kyun, being interviewed after a police investigation]

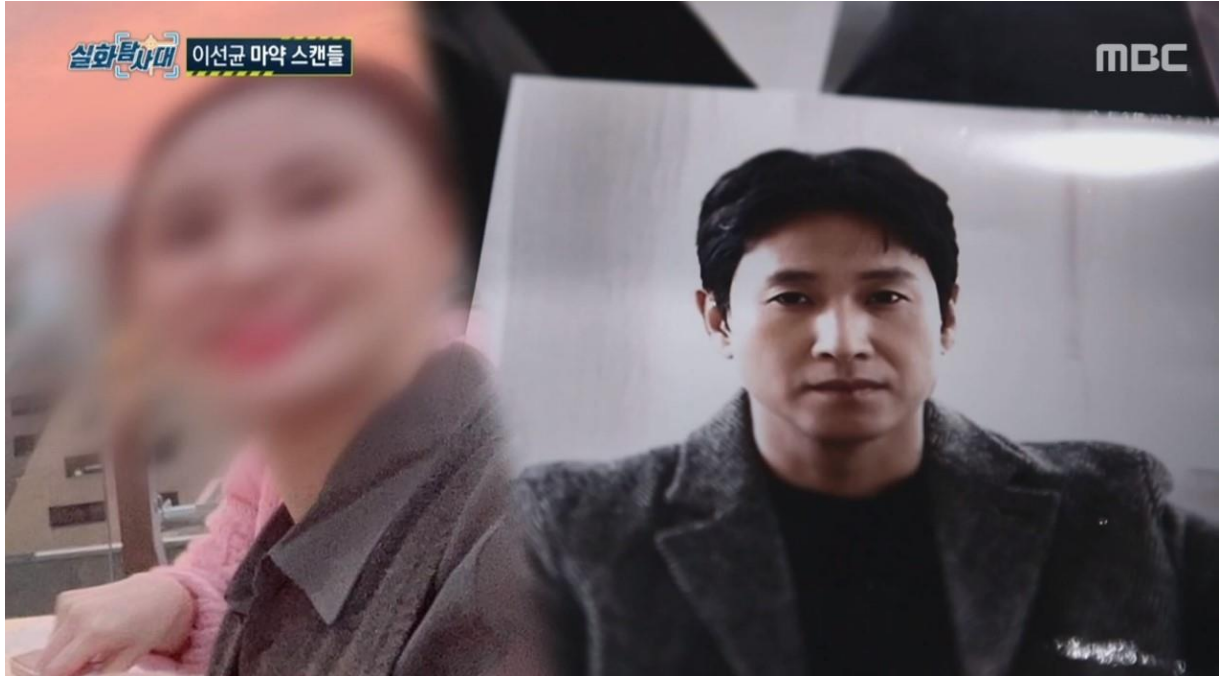


Figure B33. IMBC News. (2023, November 23.). "Male who hid female manager in 'Lee Sun-kyun drug scandal'. Wanted for fraud?" (True Story Investigation Team)" [Image of Lee Sun Kyun edited with a blurred picture of a female manager of the entertainment establishment]



Figure B34. IMBC News. (2023, November 23.). "Male who hid female manager in 'Lee Sun-kyun drug scandal'. Wanted for fraud?" (True Story Investigation Team)" [Blurred image of the female manager of the entertainment establishment]



Figure B35. IMBC News. (2023, November 23.). "Male who hid female manager in 'Lee Sun-

kyun drug scandal'. Wanted for fraud?" (True Story Investigation Team)" [Photography of Lee Sun Kyun, giving interview at the police investigation attendance]



Figure B36. IMBC News. (2023, November 23). "Lee Sun-kyun Drug Scandal... Exclusive Acquisition of Chat and Call Contents with Female Manager & Hacker (True Story Investigation Team)" [Edited images of Lee Sun Kyun and the female manager of the entertainment establishment and the message exchange screenshot between the manager and a blackmailer,

talking about Lee Sun Kyun] (some images in this edited image don't relate to the case of Lee Sun Kyun)



Figure B37. KBS News. (2023, November 06). *"Lee Sun-kyun "Fooled by Entertainment Establishment Manager...Didn't Know It Was Drugs"* [Screenshot from a video, which was attached to an online article. Screenshot shows Lee Sun Kyun, being interviewed right after police investigation]



Figure B38. KBS News. (2023, November 06). "Lee Sun-kyun "Fooled by Entertainment Establishment Manager...Didn't Know It Was Drugs" [Screenshot from a video, which was attached to an online article. Screenshot shows Lee Sun Kyun, being interviewed right after police investigation]



Figure B39. KBS News. (2023, November 8). Delving into the Everyday: 'Drugs', Easy to Get into, Hard to Heal. [Screenshot from a TV news, which was attached to the online article. Screenshot shows three different Korean Celebrities, who involved drug allegation].



Figure B40. KBS News. (2023, November 8). Delving into the Everyday: 'Drugs', Easy to Get

into, Hard to Heal. [Screenshot from a TV news, which was attached to the online article. Screenshot shows various drugs, medicaments, representing illegal drugs].



Figure B41. KBS News. (2023, November 8). Delving into the Everyday: 'Drugs', Easy to Get into, Hard to Heal. [Screenshot from a TV news, which was attached to the online article. Ice, Drugs].



Figure B42. KBS News. (2023, November 8). *Delving into the Everyday: 'Drugs', Easy to Get into, Hard to Heal.* [Screenshot from a TV news, which was attached to the online article, showing a representative figure of drug dealer and drugs].



Figure B43. KBS News. (2023, November 8). *Delving into the Everyday: 'Drugs', Easy to Get into, Hard to Heal.* [Screenshot from a TV news, which was attached to the online article, showing a representative figure of drug dealer and drugs].

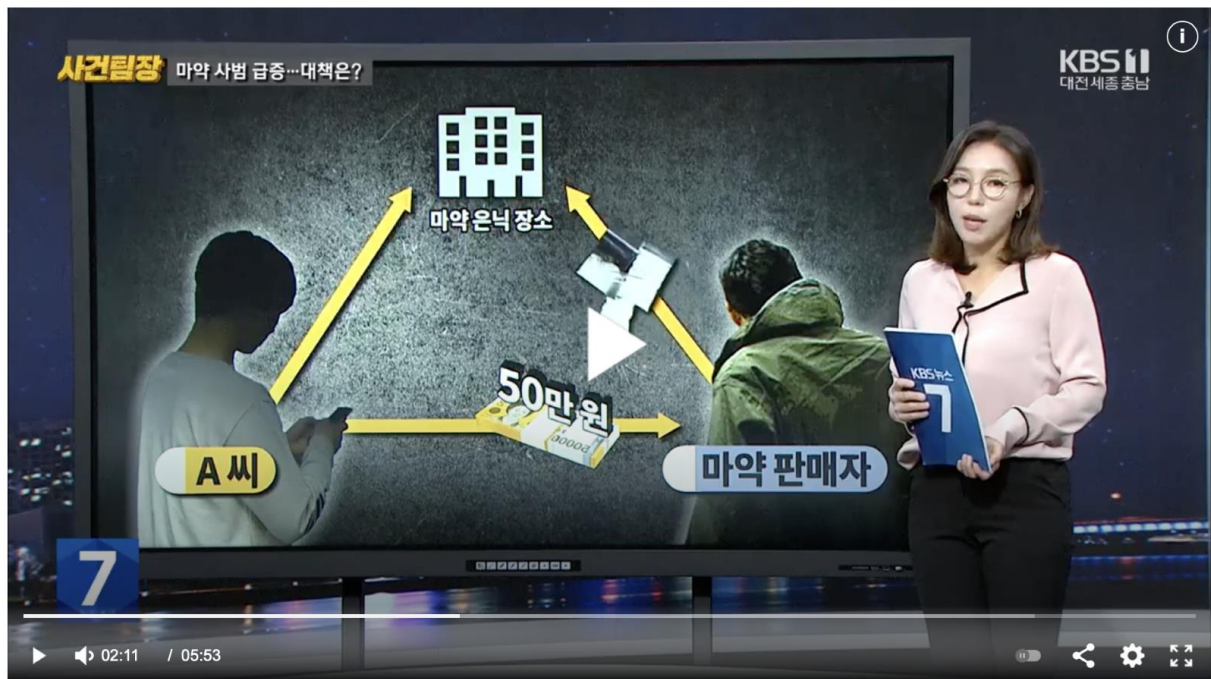


Figure B44. KBS News. (2023, November 8). Delving into the Everyday: 'Drugs', Easy to Get into, Hard to Heal. [Screenshot from a TV news, which was attached to the online article, showing a representative figure of drug dealer and drugs].



Figure B45. KBS News. (2023, November 8). Delving into the Everyday: 'Drugs', Easy to Get into, Hard to Heal. [Screenshot from a TV news, which was attached to the online article, showing a representative figure of drug dealer and drugs].



Figure B46. KBS News. (2023, November 8). Delving into the Everyday: 'Drugs', Easy to Get

into, Hard to Heal. [Screenshot from a TV news, which was attached to the online article, showing drugs].

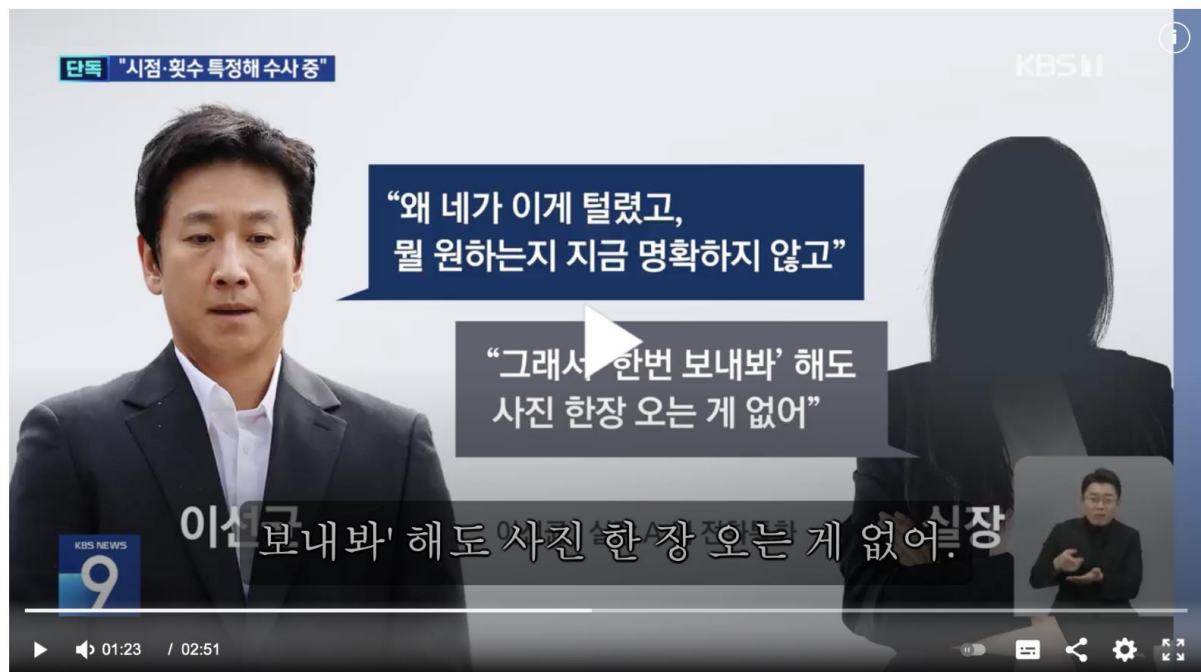


Figure B47. KBS. (2023, November 24). "[Exclusive] Entertainment Bar Manager Claims '5 Instances of Drug Use'... Lee Sun-kyun's Side Denies 'False Allegations'" [Screenshot from a video, which was attached to the online article, showing Lee Sun Kyun and a female figure, which represents the female manager of the entertainment establishment. This Image shows their phone call conversation].



Figure B48. KBS News. (2023, November 24). "[Exclusive] Entertainment Bar Manager Claims '5 Instances of Drug Use'... Lee Sun-kyun's Side Denies 'False Allegations'"[Screenshot].



Figure B49. KBS News. (2023, November 24). "[Exclusive] Entertainment Bar Manager Claims '5 Instances of Drug Use'... Lee Sun-kyun's Side Denies 'False Allegations'"[Screenshot].



Figure B50. KBS News. (2023, November 24). "[Exclusive] Entertainment Bar Manager Claims '5 Instances of Drug Use'... Lee Sun-kyun's Side Denies 'False Allegations'"[Screenshot].

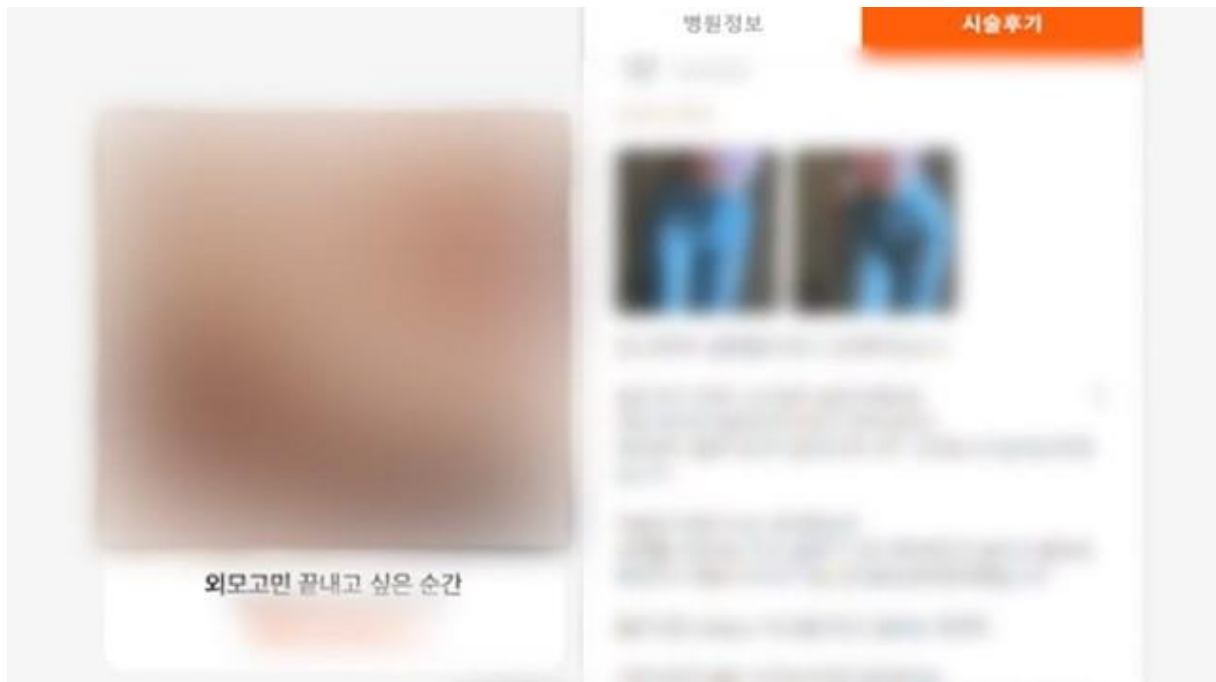


Figure B51. KBS News. (2023, November 26) "[Exclusive] 'Received Three Types of Drugs as a

Birthday Gift'... Doctor Suspected of Drug Supply to Face Warrant Hearing Tomorrow" [Image of a blurred webpage, where the female manager of the entertainment establishment posted].



Figure B52. Yeon, I. MBC News. (2023, December 28). *"Change of burial site for the late Lee Sun-kyun, from Buan, Jeollabuk-do to Suwon's Yeonhwa Cemetery... Funeral on the 29th"* [Photography of a Lee Sun Kyun's portrait at his funeral].



Figure B53. Yeon, I. MBC News (2023, December 28). *"Change of burial site for the late Lee Sun-kyun, from Buan, Jeollabuk-do to Suwon's Yeonhwa Cemetery... Funeral on the 29th"* [Photography of a Lee Sun Kyun's portrait at his funeral].



Figure B54. Yeon, I. MBC News. (2023, December 28). *"Change of burial site for the late Lee Sun-kyun, from Buan, Jeollabuk-do to Suwon's Yeonhwa Cemetery... Funeral on the 29th"*
[Photography of a Lee Sun Kyun's portrait at his funeral].



Figure B55. Yeon, I. MBC News. (2023, December 28). *"Change of burial site for the late Lee Sun-kyun, from Buan, Jeollabuk-do to Suwon's Yeonhwa Cemetery... Funeral on the 29th"*
[Photography of a Lee Sun Kyun's portrait at his funeral].



Figure B56. Yeon, I. MBC News. (2023, December 28). *"Change of burial site for the late Lee Sun-kyun, from Buan, Jeollabuk-do to Suwon's Yeonhwa Cemetery... Funeral on the 29th"* [Photography of a Lee Sun Kyun's scheduled funeral on the screen of the funeral organization].



Figure B57. Ryu, H. MBC News. (2023, December 29). *Funeral of the late Lee Seon-kyun... To be enshrined in Gwangju, Gyeonggi.* [Photography of a Lee Sun Kyun's farewell].



Figure B58. Ryu, H. (2023, December 29). *Funeral of the late Lee Seon-kyun... To be enshrined in Gwangju, Gyeonggi.* MBC News. [Photography of a Lee Sun Kyun's farewell].



Figure B59. Kwak, S. (2023, December 29). *Tears shed at 'Late Lee Sun-kyun's' funeral... Jeon Hye-jin and two sons bid final farewell.* MBC News [Photography of a Lee Sun Kyun's wife, Jin Hye-Jin, edited with a photo of late actor's funeral portrait].



Figure B60. Gu, N. (2023, December 29). *[Exclusive] Lee Seon-kyun's side submitted an*

opinion that "the police influenced the chief's statement lightly" just before his death. MBC News. [Photography of Lee Sun Kyun, at his last police investigation]

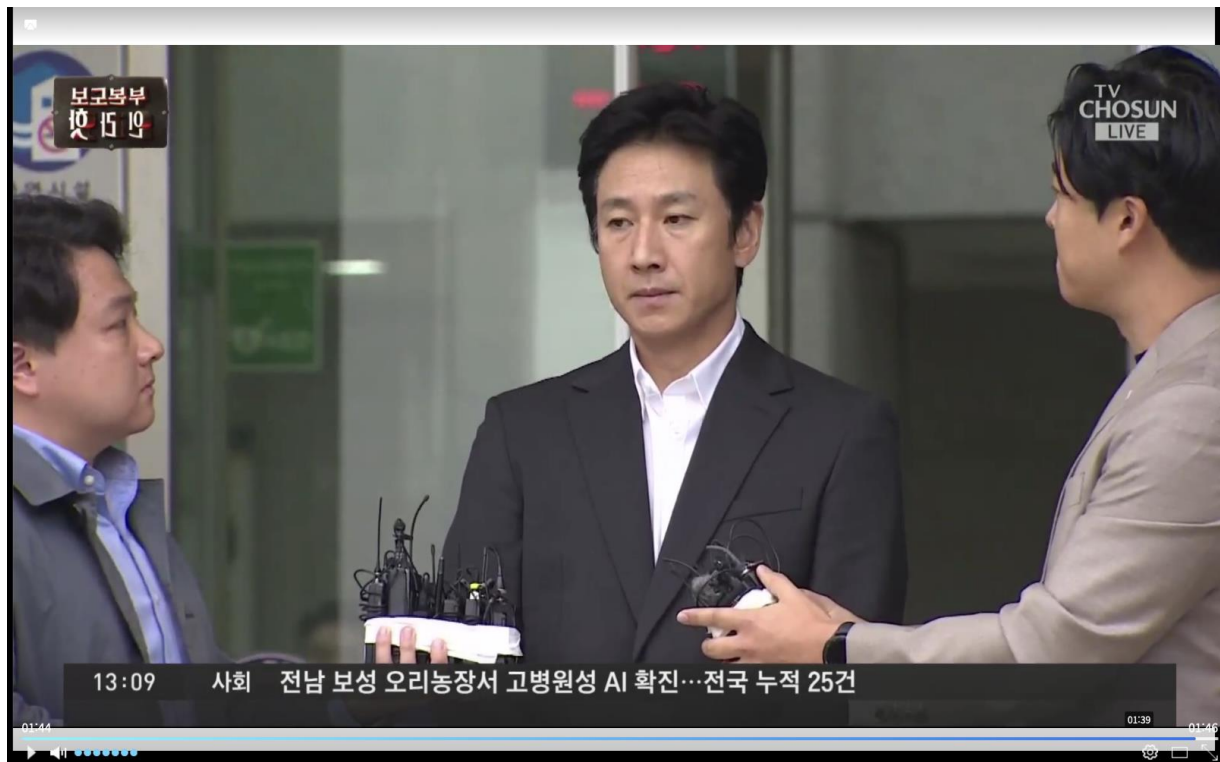


Figure B61. TV Chosun News. (2023, December 27). *"Drug suspicion" actor Lee Seon-kyun found dead in a car... "Possibility of extreme choice"*. [Screenshot of Lee Sun Kyun being interviewed after a police investigation]



Figure B62. TV Chosun News. (2023, December 27). *"Drug suspicion" actor Lee Seon-kyun found dead in a car... "Possibility of extreme choice"*. [Screenshot from a TV news segment, which was attached to the online article. The screenshot shows a park where the late actor was found dead, and police are checking the scene.]



Figure B63. TV Chosun News. (2023, December 27). *"Drug suspicion" actor Lee Seon-kyun found dead in a car... "Possibility of extreme choice"*. [Screenshot from a TV news segment, which was attached to the online article. The screenshot shows a park where the late actor was found dead, and police are checking the scene.]



Figure B64. TV Chosun News. (2023, December 27). *"Drug suspicion" actor Lee Seon-kyun found dead in a car... "Possibility of extreme choice"*. [Screenshot from a TV news segment, which was attached to the online article. The screenshot shows the late actor's car, where he was found dead, and police are checking the scene.]

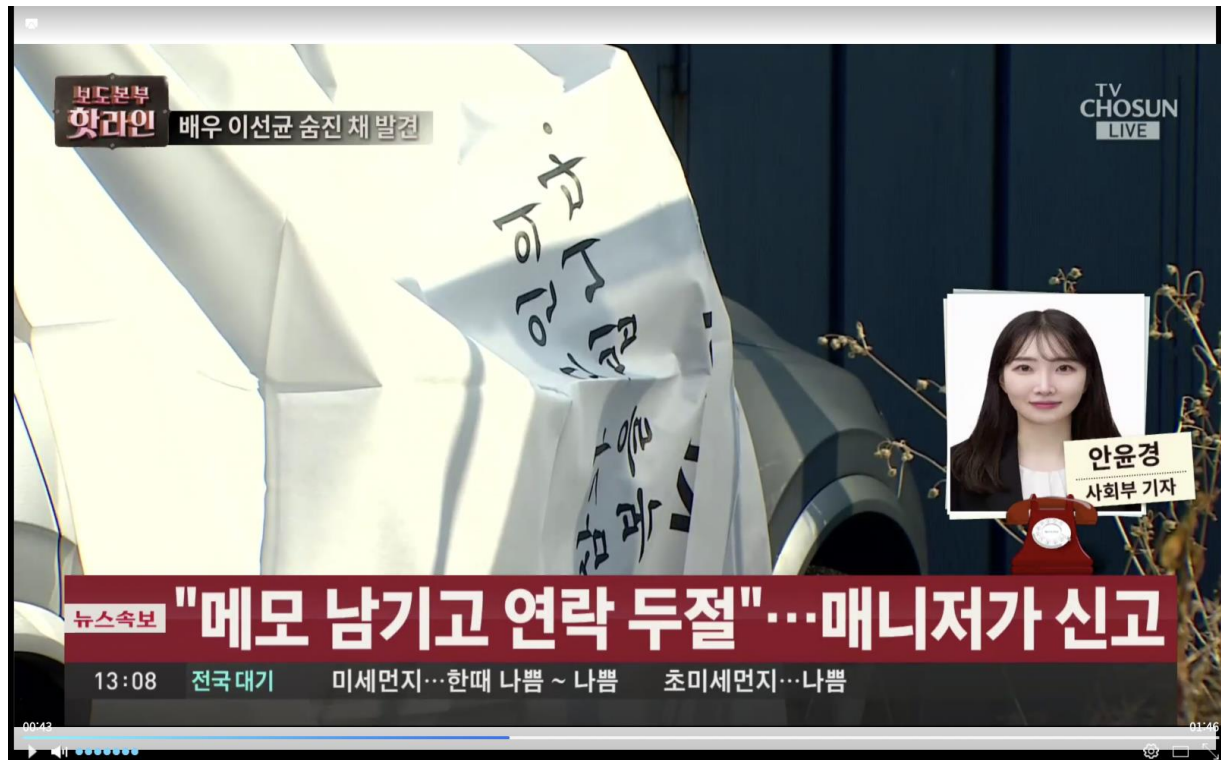


Figure B65. TV Chosun News. (2023, December 27). *"Drug suspicion" actor Lee Seon-kyun found dead in a car... "Possibility of extreme choice"*. [Screenshot from a TV news segment, which was attached to the online article. The screenshot shows a park where the late actor was found dead, and police are checking the scene.]



Figure B66. TV Chosun News. (2023, December 27). *"Drug suspicion" actor Lee Seon-kyun found dead in a car... "Possibility of extreme choice"*. [Screenshot from a TV news segment, which was attached to the online article. The screenshot shows a park where the late actor was found dead, and police are checking the scene.]



Figure B67. TV Chosun News. (2023, December 27). *"Drug suspicion" Lee Seon-kyun found dead in a car... Left a suicide note last night saying "lost contact"*. [Screenshot from a TV news segment, which was attached to the online article. The screenshot shows Lee Sun kyun, being interviewed at the arrival for police investigation.]



Figure B68. TV Chosun News. (2023, December 27). "Drug suspicion" Lee Seon-kyun found dead in a car... Left a suicide note last night saying "lost contact". [Screenshot from a TV news segment, which was attached to the online article. The screenshot shows a park where the late actor was found dead, and police are checking the scene.]



Figure B69. TV Chosun News. (2023, December 27). *"Drug suspicion" Lee Seon-kyun found dead in a car... Left a suicide note last night saying "lost contact"*. [Screenshot from a TV news segment, which was attached to the online article. The screenshot shows the late actor's car being delivered to the police station]



Figure B70. TV Chosun News. (2023, December 27). *"Drug suspicion" Lee Seon-kyun found dead in a car... Left a suicide note last night saying "lost contact"*. [Screenshot from a TV news segment, which was attached to the online article. The screenshot shows a CCTV footage of the late actor's drive to the park, where he was found dead.]



Figure B71. TV Chosun News. (2023, December 27). "Drug suspicion" Lee Seon-kyun found dead in a car... Left a suicide note last night saying "lost contact". [Screenshot from a TV news segment, which was attached to the online article. The screenshot shows a CCTV footage of the late actor's drive to the park, where he was found dead.]



Figure B72. KBS News. (November 24, 2023). *[Exclusive] Entertainment Bar Manager Claims '5 Instances of Drug Use'... Lee Sun-kyun's Side Denies 'False Allegations'*. [Screenshot of a cameraman recording Lee Sun Kyun in a police office, attending investigation].