

# The Effect of Social Media on Spreading Cosmetic Surgery in the Saudi Society from University Female Students' Point of View

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## summary

This study is an exploratory study which aimed to identify the effect of social media on spreading cosmetic surgeries in the Saudi society, address the widespread of cosmetic surgeries in the Saudi society, identify the reasons for accepting cosmetic surgeries, and the consequences of their spread within Saudi society. To achieve these objectives, an analytical descriptive approach was used as being suitable for the nature of the study. A purposive sample of students of Collage of Arts at Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University in Dammam in the Eastern Region of Saudi Arabia was selected. A number of findings were revealed in this study, notably: social media affected the spread of cosmetic surgeries in the Saudi society greatly; and cosmetic surgeries could promote social integration and improve individuals' social relationships. Finally, a number of recommendations were introduced, notably: improving the aesthetic culture of society, promoting values of self-confidence and self-satisfaction, and disregarding others' views of body appearance and focusing on personal health.

key words: Social Media, Cosmetic Surgeries.

## Introduction:

Spreading a cosmetic surgery is a recent issue in the Saudi society which is attributed to an increase in the culture of cosmetic surgeries and the overall average of income. In other words, the cost of cosmetic surgeries becomes accessible to individuals besides the increase of media focus on cosmetic surgery (Al-Aqil, 2014, p. 818). However, Arab countries in general and Saudi Arabia in particular have witnessed a significant increase in the number of cosmetic surgeries performed annually by men and women (Al-Aqil, 2014, p. 771). There are many reasons behind cosmetic surgeries, e.g., achieving self-satisfaction. So, many people believe that achieving self-satisfaction is

limited to the beauty of appearance rather than focusing on the other aspects.

Sarwer, et al. (1998, P. 9) argued that cosmetic surgeries are found in all social segments. In contrast, they believe that the widespread of cosmetic surgeries and increasing demand for it from individuals of different social and economic classes today are more than ever as the cost of these surgeries falls within their economical abilities.

According to Al-Baqmi (2014, p. 21), the competitive costs of cosmetic clinics have made many cosmetic surgeries a real option for different individuals. The medical development of the Aesthetic Surgery Service has contributed in increasing the safety of surgeries. Furthermore, the various audiovisual and reading media of social media and the existence of some accounts that publish content on cosmetic surgeries together with the various cosmetic surgeries performed have contributed directly in increasing the demand for such cosmetic surgeries. In today's modern media, their roots have deepened in society, changing individuals' behaviour, attitudes and opinions about cosmetic surgeries. However, these developments must be associated with by some alertness and caution (Al-Aqil, 2014, p. 818).

However, studies (e.g., Al-Aqil, 2014) have shown a high association of cosmetic surgeries with social media, affecting directly a large segment of society. Though, many attitudes, and even media debates of audible and legible types that discussed this problem, ignore the lack of awareness of future psychosocial effects on developing society among the nation's youth, which is an important topic. Therefore, this study is based on such a modern phenomenon which aims to address the different dimensions of the problem of spreading cosmetic surgeries from the perspective of Saudi youths. Specifically speaking, this study attempts to examine the widespread of cosmetic surgeries in the Saudi society through reviewing the social media. On this base, a number of suggestions to address this phenomenon and reduce it can be introduced.

### **First, the study problem**

Cosmetic surgeries are a widespread phenomenon in the Saudi society where many people rely on these surgeries to improve their external appearance to enhance their self-confidence. As social media spread and their uses increase, this study provides a comprehensive view of how these social media affect the spread and enhancement of cosmetic surgeries in the Saudi society, and how this affects individuals' psychosocial aspects.

Many recent studies have shown that social media play an important role in spreading cosmetic surgeries in society. This comes in line with the results of Arif, (2022) which found that 69% of the sample showed more knowledge of cosmetic surgeries due to social media. In 2019, a study published by

Journal of Forensic and Forensic Sciences indicated that the rates of cosmetic surgeries in Saudi Arabia increased by 25% over the past five years. Other studies indicated that there are a number of various factors that lead to spreading cosmetic surgeries such as the lack of self-confidence and interest in others' opinion. This in turn largely affects individuals' psychosocial aspects, causing them to turn to cosmetic surgeries, which can cause negative or positive outcomes (Slivec, 2010, p. 65).

Based on the findings of previous studies and related statistics, social media play a great role in notifying individuals that cosmetic surgeries are the best means to achieve perfect beauty. Really, it is undeniable that there are challenges encountered in regard to personal traits and the way to adapt with the ideal standards of the Saudi culture (Al-Mansour, 2020, p. 37).

However, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, the previous studies show shortcomings concerning the impact of cosmetic surgeries. Therefore, the current study aims to identify the reasons behind spreading cosmetic surgeries in the Saudi society, the motives behind the demand for these surgeries and its connections with social media, and the effects of their spread in the Saudi society.

Therefore, the problem of the study can be formulated as "The effect of social media on spreading cosmetic surgery in the Saudi Society".

### **Significance of the Study**

This study attempts to bridge the gap in the related previous studies and encourage researchers to undertake similar studies for the sake of enriching library. In turn, this contributes in enriching scientific knowledge and introducing recommendations that may help in reducing the spread of unnecessary cosmetic surgeries and raising awareness of their consequences on society.

### **Questions of the Study**

This study attempts to address the main question of the study "what is effect of social media on spreading cosmetic surgery in the Saudi society? To address this question, a number of sub-questions can be addressed:

- What is the extent of speeding cosmetic surgeries in the Saudi society?
- What are the reasons behind accepting cosmetic surgeries in the Saudi society?
- What are the consequences of speeding cosmetic surgeries in the Saudi society?

### **Literature Review**

Al-Taleb (2017) pointed out that the media and social networking are the most important reasons for participants to perform cosmetic surgeries to obtain a socially acceptable appearance, the ideal appearance women and girls should have as learnt by social media. However, Al-Aqil (2014) added that there is a relationship between girls' personal qualities (e.g., age, marital status, etc.) when they decide to do cosmetic surgeries. A sample of Saudi girls was selected randomly through using a stratified sampling technique. The most significant findings of the study was that the girls, aged between 20s and 30s, were the most performers for cosmetic surgeries than others. Al-Baqmi's (2014) study, which aimed at expecting the acceptance of cosmetic surgeries, addressed self-satisfaction with a purposive sample of 300 (135 males and 165 females) to improve their body appearance, and her sample was in the intended sample. A descriptive approach was used to collect the required data. The most significant findings of the study were that the aim of making cosmetic surgeries was to improve their body appearance and develop self-esteem showing differences between males and females concerning accepting cosmetic surgeries.

Al-Shahari (2020) found that there was an effect for social media on social interaction between society members. The study was administered to a purposive sample of 200 male and female users who used the program of modern social media spread in Saudi Arabia. To collect the data, a questionnaire, composing of a number of dimensions in relation to the study, and a social survey were used. The most significant findings of the study showed that more than half of the respondents use the program every day for less than an hour which is a short time. This can be attributed to the speed of receiving the messages of the programme and the speed of using the program itself in comparison with the other media that need much time for loading full pages of Net. However, Al-Namer (2014) found that social media are considered as an independent factor made by the recipient himself/herself, which is not subject to old working mechanisms previously known in media. This finding was supported by Arif (2022), which aimed to identify the effect of social media on relaying on cosmetic surgeries. The findings of the study showed that there were positive correlations between the items of the questionnaire concerning cosmetic surgeries; 234 women (69%) agreed that their great knowledge on cosmetic surgeries was due to social media; 33% of the sample showed interest in non-surgical facial cosmetic surgeries, 33% die not show any interest in such surgeries, while the rest were neutral; 84 women (25%) said that they visited a dermatology clinic for consultation,; and 64 (19%) of women said they did a non-surgical cosmetic facial procedure.

### **Previous Studies**

There is an agreement between the current study and the previous studies in the sample selected which consisted of female and male users of social

media. However, the current study did not accord with Al-Baqmi's (2014) and Al-Taleb et al., 2019 which selected purposive samples of males and females who did cosmetic surgeries.

### **Scientific Gap Addressed in this Study**

After ensuring both agreements and disagreements between the previous studies, it is noticed that the current study accorded with previous studies in the topic and did not accord with them in many aspects, the gap addressed in this study. That is, the current study attempts to connect the research problem to modern variables. Due to contemporary transformations in Saudi society, the need for conducting new studies to/that address the effect of social media on spreading cosmetic surgeries.

On this base, the current study addresses the gap indicating above by addressing this new topic, to the best knowledge of the researchers, in the Saudi society. That is, the researchers found no previous studies addressed this topic after 2010, on the Saudi society in particular. Therefore, the study attempts to go beyond a partial view by identifying both positive and negative effects of social media on spreading cosmetic surgeries in the Saudi society.

### **Related Theories**

The theory helps the researchers determine the bath of their research and facilitates the process of interpreting of the results reached (Washnan, 2017, p. 273). That is, George Herbert Mead's symbolic Reactive Theory may help the researchers understand the nature of the relationship between the theory and the research topic. That is, in the symbolic theory of interaction, the social interaction is constructed by stimulus and response shared by individuals among them. Then, the interacting parties change from the state that was before the interaction process, forming the social reality to adapt with it. Then, the social truth adopts a purely symbolic social construction; with the appearance of these symbols, interaction takes place (Othman & Sari, 2010, p. 202).

Interactive symbols are fundamental principles on which the social theory is based for analysing social patterns. These symbols address social micro-units and use them as a starting point for understanding macro- ones. As a result, an individual's behaviors reflect constants which shape a composite structure of roles, which can be analysed by assessing individuals' expectations of each other with respect to the meanings and symbols associated with these roles (Al-Goolani, 1997, p. 215).

The spread of cosmetic surgeries in the Saudi society can be explained as social media interactions starting by posting specific content about cosmetic surgeries on social media platforms (e.g., Instagram Twitter, etc.) This content affects users through the stimulus and response that happen

between them and the content. Accordingly, a shift in their looks and beliefs occurs due to ads and posts that include pictures of perfect and impressive cosmetic surgeries on social media. This in turn affects users' perceptions of beauty and its meaning in society especially those who depend on what social media shows on cosmetic surgeries.

Therefore, a society can be affected by the spread of this phenomenon in addition to the aesthetic standards available in the Saudi society. In other words, social media have reinforced these standards among the Saudi society members through verbal and non-verbal symbols and signals used in such media, affecting the pattern followed by these members.

## **Methodology**

### **Study Design**

The study was an exploratory study because the topic has not been addressed in social studies in the Saudi society.

### **Research Methodology**

Due to the nature of the current study and its objectives, an analytical descriptive approach was used.

### **Sample**

The sample of the study was composed of 160 female students of College of Arts at Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University.

### **Research Tools**

A questionnaire was used as a research tool in this study because this topic might be sensitive to some participants, especially females in Saudi society. That is, the questionnaire was more preferable than interviews. This questionnaire was composed of two parts. *Part I* was concerned with preliminary data of participants to identify certain personal features of the sample (e.g., age). *Part II* contained three areas: spreading cosmetic surgeries in the Saudi society, motivations for the doing cosmetic surgeries on social media from the sample's point of view, and the effect of spreading cosmetic surgeries in the Saudi society.

### **Validity and Reliability**

After designing the questionnaire, it was submitted to a group of field experts to test its face validity using the coefficients of internal validity and constructive validity. The result showed that the correlation values for all items of the dimension "prevalence of cosmetic surgeries in the Saudi society were statistically significant at the level of 0.05, ranging between (.411 \* \* -.706 \* \*). This indicates that all items were connected to the overall degree of the dimension.

To calculate the reliability of the tool, Alpha Cronbach Coefficient was used.

## Results

### Descriptive Analysis of Sample Age

**Table 1** Frequency of Sample based on Age

Age	F	%
18 – 20	64	40.0
21 – 23	88	55.0
24 – 26	5	3.1
27 – above	3	1.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 1 shows that 64 (40.0%) participants were aged between 18 – 20; 88 (55%) participants were aged between 21 – 23; 5 (3.1%) participants were aged between 24 – 26; and 3 (1.9%) participants were aged between 27 – above.

### Descriptive Analysis of Dimensions

**Table 2** Descriptive analysis of Dimensions of Effect of Social media

No.	Dimensions	N	M	SD	%	t	Rank
1	Cosmetic surgeries spreading	160	4.29	.513	85.8	105.856**	1
2	Social and psychological motivations	160	4.13	.633	82.5	82.419**	2
3	Consequences of spreading cosmetic surgeries	160	4.08	.582	81.5	88.617**	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>160</b>	<b>4.17</b>	<b>.485</b>	<b>83.4</b>	<b>108.715**</b>	

Table 2 shows that the overall mean score of the effect of social media on spreading cosmetic surgeries in the Saudi society was high ( $M = 4.17$ ,  $SD = .485$ ,  $\% = 83.4$ ,  $t = 108.715$ ). However, there were statistically significant differences between the real mean and the assumed mean (819) in favor of the real mean. Specifically speaking, the overall mean score of the first dimension "cosmetic surgeries spreading" was high ( $M = 4.29$ ,  $\% = 85.8$ ), posting the **top** rank; the overall mean score of the second dimension "social and psychological motivations" was high ( $M = 4.13$ ,  $\% = 82.5$ ), posting the second top rank; and the overall mean score of the third dimension "Consequences of spreading cosmetic surgeries" was high ( $M = 4.08$ ,  $\% = 81.5$ ), posting the third top rank.

These results however showed that there was a relationship between social media and the spread of cosmetic surgeries in the Saudi society. This in turn accord with the Symbolic Interactive Theory in the social media can be considered as interactive symbols used in communication between individuals and to show beauty or perfection of external appearance. This in turn might increase of individuals' desire to do cosmetic surgeries needless to forget the role of aesthetic standards in the Saudi society in shaping these aesthetic symbols that may contribute in spreading cosmetic surgeries. In other words, this might motivate them do cosmetic surgeries that might cause either negative or positive effects on the society.

**Area I: The extent of spreading Cosmetic Surgeries in the Saudi Society****Table 3 Participants' Responses to Area I**

No.	Items	M	SD	%	t	Rank
1	Social media contribute in knowing of cosmetic surgeries	4.78	.546	95.6	110.833**	1
2	Easy access to beauty centers.	4.51	.709	90.1	80.361**	4
3	Availability of popular beauty clinics in Saudi Society.	4.29	.880	85.9	61.702**	8
4	Saudi society acceptance for cosmetic surgeries.	3.58	1.119	71.5	40.411**	9
5	High standard of living contribute in making cosmetic surgeries necessary.	3.38	1.335	67.5	31.971**	10
6	Most cosmetic surgeries succeed in curing problems such as burns, wounds and congenital abnormalities.	4.58	.722	91.6	80.233**	2
7	Famous people publishing their cosmetic surgeries social media	4.37	.895	87.4	61.773**	7
8	Spreading selfies on social media makes people become more obsessed with their appearance.	4.58	.705	91.6	82.240**	3
9	Technical advances in cosmetic surgeries increase interest in cosmetic surgeries.	4.41	.788	88.3	70.814**	6
10	Striving to keep up with beauty standards available on social media's widespread.	4.44	.724	88.8	77.514**	5
<b>Total</b>		<b>4.29</b>	<b>0.513</b>	<b>85.8</b>	<b>105.856**</b>	<b>-</b>

Table 3 shows that the overall mean score of the extent of spreading cosmetic surgeries in the Saudi society was high ( $M = 4.29$ ,  $\% = 85.8$ ) and the value of  $t$  was positive. This indicates that there were statistically significant differences between the real mean and the assumed mean in favor of the real mean. Specifically speaking, the overall mean score of the first item "Social media contribute in knowing of cosmetic surgeries" was high ( $M = 4.78$ ,  $\% = 95.6$ ), posting the **top** rank; the overall mean score of the item "Most cosmetic surgeries succeed in curing problems such as burns, wounds and congenital abnormalities" was high ( $M = 4.58$ ,  $\% = 91.6$ ), posting the second top rank; *and* the overall mean score of the item "Spreading selfies on social media makes people become more obsessed with their appearance" was high ( $M = 4.58$ ,  $\% = 91.6$ ), posting the third top rank.

These results accorded with Aref (2022) in the effect of social media on cosmetic surgeries which found that 69% of women believed that social media helped increase knowledge on cosmetic surgeries. In addition, these results accorded with the Symbolic Interactive Theory in that human behaviour is influenced by interacting with social and cultural symbols and connotations which are considered as a symbols signifying common meanings and values in a society. Accordingly, social media and aesthetic standards spread led to the spread of cosmetic surgeries in the Saudi society due to the role of social symbols and connotations in shaping aesthetic models and ideas about beauty in the Saudi society.

**Area II: Identification of social and psychological motives that lead to**



**spreading cosmetic Surgeries in the Saudi Society****Table 4: Participants' Responses to Area II**

No.	Items	M	SD	%	t	Rank
1	Some members of society are keen on increasing marriage opportunities.	3.63	1.169	72.6	39.295**	10
2	Attempting to satisfy bullies.	3.85	1.077	77.0	45.221**	8
3	Avoiding community ostracism.	3.92	1.127	78.4	43.984**	7
4	Some individuals' desire to cope with aesthetic standards imposed on them by media and popular culture.	4.36	.796	87.1	69.242**	4
5	Paying attention to others' views on the appearance Of their bodies contributes to the spread of cosmetic surgeries.	4.38	.902	87.5	61.320**	2
6	Lack of self-confidence.	4.34	.889	86.8	61.688**	5
7	Jealousy of social media celebrities.	3.81	1.167	76.3	41.339**	9
8	Desire for meeting partner's satisfaction.	4.11	.922	82.1	56.328**	6
9	Dissatisfaction with the general appearance leads some people to perform cosmetic surgeries.	4.49	.735	89.9	77.292**	1
10	Fear of signs of age advance.	4.38	.874	87.5	63.307**	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>4.13</b>	<b>0.633</b>	<b>82.5</b>	<b>82.419**</b>	<b>-</b>

Table 4 shows that the overall mean score of the extent of applying social and psychological motives was high ( $M = 4.13$ ,  $\% = 82.5$ ) and the value of  $t$  was positive. This indicates that there were statistically significant differences between the real mean and the assumed mean in favor of the real mean which indicates that the degree of social and psychological motives was high. That is, the degree of all items of was significantly high.

That is, the degree of dissatisfaction with the general appearance prompted some participants to perform cosmetic surgeries was high ( $M = 4.49$ ,  $\% = 89.9$ ); the degree of paying attention to others' opinions regarding their physical appearance contributed in spreading cosmetic surgeries was high ( $M = 4.38$ ,  $\% = 87.5$ ); and the degree of the fear of aging signs was high ( $M = 4.38$ ,  $\% = 87.5$ ).

Al-Taleb (2017) accorded with the current study which aimed to identify the social causes of women's trends towards cosmetic surgeries. The most significant results showed that social media were the most important reasons behind performing cosmetic surgeries in order to obtain a socially acceptable appearance based on the ideal appearance of women and girls determined by social media. In addition, Al-Namer (2014) accorded with the current study in the second area which aimed to identify the motivations of Saudi and Egyptian female students behind exposing to the new media, showing that the main reason for media ads was the fact that the new media was independent by itself.

According to the Symbolic Interactive Theory, individuals interacted with symbols and signals found in their social environment which affected their behavior and beliefs. On this base, the social motivations for accepting

cosmetic surgeries in social media was the desire to respond to social beauty standards and adhere to the dominant beauty standards in the Saudi society. However, the psychological motivations for accepting cosmetic surgeries in social media can be found in several aspects due to the lack of self-confidence which enhances the lack of accepting one's appearance, and desire to promote her appearance and self-confidence.

### Area III: Consequences of spreading cosmetic surgeries in the Saudi society

**Table 5: Participants' Responses to Area III**

No.	Items	M	SD	%	t	Rank
1	Contributing in increasing people's influence on social media.	4.39	.785	87.8	70.700**	2
2	Contributing to curing congenital abnormalities/defects.	4.51	.727	90.3	78.542**	1
3	Some feel good about the external appearance.	4.26	.968	85.3	55.701**	3
4	Improving the level of self-confidence and sense of beauty	4.24	.935	84.8	57.332**	4
5	Complications caused by cosmetic surgeries.	4.24	.872	84.8	61.450**	3
6	Results of cosmetic surgeries done by patients are positive	3.85	.979	77.0	49.742**	6
7	Improving social relationships.	3.46	1.191	69.1	36.695**	8
8	Causing death.	3.66	1.127	73.3	41.125**	7
<b>Total</b>		<b>4.08</b>	<b>0.582</b>	<b>81.5</b>	<b>88.617**</b>	<b>-</b>

Table 5 shows that the overall mean score of the effect of consequences of spreading cosmetic surgeries in the Saudi society was high ( $M = 4.08$ ,  $\% = 81.5$ ) and the value of  $t$  was positive. This indicates that there were statistically significant differences between the real mean and the assumed mean in favor of the real mean which indicates that the degree of so consequences of spreading cosmetic surgeries in the Saudi society was *high*. That is, the degree of all items of was significantly high. Furthermore, treating congenital abnormalities/defects contributed in spreading cosmetic surgeries ( $M = 4.51$ ,  $\% = 90.3$ ) with an average calculation showing that the participants believed that the mean score of their satisfaction with their external appearance was high ( $M = 4.26$ ,  $\% = 85.3$ ).

### Conclusion

The results of the study revealed that the effect of social media on spreading cosmetic surgeries in the Saudi society was *high* (83.4%). This accorded with Aref (2022) in the effect of social media on cosmetic surgeries which found that 69% of women had knowledge on cosmetic surgeries due to social media.

The results also showed that the spread of cosmetic surgeries in the Saudi society was controlled by a number of social and psychological motivations. Statistical analysis indicated that the spread of cosmetic surgeries in the Saudi society interacted with social and psychological motivations that prompted individuals to resort to them, and there were consequences

caused by the spread of cosmetic surgeries in the Saudi society.

The study revealed the spread of cosmetic surgeries in the Saudi society was common while the spread of selfies on social media made people more obsessed with their appearance. Based on the Symbolic Reactive Theory, individuals interact with each other by symbols which are words, concepts and images. That is, they rely on symbols of physical appearance to communicate and interact with each other. Social and psychological pressures govern their decisions of performing cosmetic surgeries and social media reinforce these beliefs and ideas, increasing willingness to perform cosmetic surgeries, as a result. Therefore, this result can be linked to the Symbolic Reactive Theory by emphasizing that social media played an important role in raising awareness of cosmetic surgeries, making them more common in Saudi society.

Finally, the study revealed that the most significant consequences of spreading cosmetic surgeries in Saudi society were treating congenital abnormalities and defects and feeling of satisfaction with the external appearance. In addition, cosmetic surgeries contributed in promoting social integration and improving social relations among individuals.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, a number of recommendations are suggested:

- Establishing awareness education programmes in schools and universities that help young people understand aesthetic pictures.
- The need to direct media agents and beauty experts to preserve Arabic culture and find healthy alternatives to cosmetic surgeries.
- Forming working groups to develop media models in Saudi Arabia to enable participants to discuss and review their ideas and suggestions to make the media more effective.
- Improving the aesthetic culture of society and discussing the issue of positive thinking about body.
- Ignoring others' views on body appearance and focusing on personal clearance.

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