

The Rise of Cosmetic Procedures: The role of body esteem, social comparison, gender and social media use.

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Declaration

Declaration

‘I declare that this thesis that I have submitted to Dublin Business School for the award of BA (Hons) Psychology is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated, where it is clearly acknowledged by references. Furthermore, this work has not been submitted for any other degree.’

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Signed: Sophie Louise Redmond

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Abstract

Cosmetic procedures are growing rapidly in popularity each year. The aim of the current study was to investigate whether body-esteem, social comparison, gender and social media addiction were predictors of wanting a cosmetic procedure. One hundred and fifty-six participants filled out a questionnaire. The study was of a quantitative correlational design. Statistically reliable scales were used. Participants were asked how likely they would be to undergo a cosmetic procedure. Results indicate that low body-esteem, negative social comparison and high social media addiction predicted higher levels of a desire for a cosmetic procedure. Additionally, females were more likely to want a cosmetic procedure than males, on average, and females with low body-esteem were more likely to have negative social comparison. This study suggests that there may be underlying influences as to why people undergo cosmetic procedures, theoretical implications are discussed within.

Introduction

Cosmetic procedures are treatments that aim to change one's appearance by using surgical and non-surgical techniques. While cosmetic procedures were once considered uncommon and often only undergone by celebrities and people of affluence. Prevalence rates in society are increasing, data from the American Society of Plastic Surgeons demonstrates that 18 million people underwent cosmetic procedures in 2018, which is almost a quarter of a million more than in 2017 (American Society of Plastic Surgeons, 2018). Another study found that in the UK there was a 285.95% increase in the number of cosmetic procedures being performed from 2002 to 2011 (Nassab & Harris, 2013). In a study by Therapie Clinic it was found that 47% of Irish people would consider a botox treatment (Therapie Clinic, 2015). A survey done by Amara looking at cosmetic trends in Ireland found that 62% of participants knew someone who has had or regularly has aesthetic treatments (Amara , 2016). With the continuing rise in popularity for fillers, botox and surgical cosmetic surgery, the main objective of the current study is to explore whether certain variables are associated with one's decision to get a cosmetic procedure. With such a high rise and risk with these procedures it is necessary to question the reason behind it. What is influencing people to desire these procedures?

A study carried out in 2012 investigating the factors that motivate people to undergo cosmetic procedures found that females with low self-esteem, low life satisfaction, low self-rated attractiveness and who watched television excessively were more likely to undergo cosmetic procedures (Furnham & Levitas, 2012). The results of this study indicated that negative feelings towards oneself and one's image can provide motivation to get a cosmetic procedure. Additionally, those who reported high levels of television consumption were more likely to get one of these procedures (Furnham & Levitas, 2012). Another study looking into predictors of young women's interest in acquiring cosmetic procedures found similar results. The study used 101 college female undergraduates in northern eastern America as their

sample. Participants' weight, body dissatisfaction, internalization of media messages and receiving negative comments about their physical appearance increased the likelihood of an interest in getting a cosmetic procedure (Markey & Markey, 2009). Again, a relationship between negative self-perception and an influence from media sources made people more likely to want a cosmetic procedure.

A review of the most recent literature indicated that some of psychosocial characteristics of patients interested in cosmetic surgery, such as body image and self-esteem, were associated with social media use. The study found these may either positively or negatively affect one's motivation to get a cosmetic procedure (Milothridis, Pavlidis, Haidich & Panagopoulou, 2016). Results from these three studies posit that issues with body esteem or body image and different types of media use can have significant effects on a person's motivations to get cosmetic procedures.

Many of these studies were conducted before social media became the main source of media consumption and engagement. The aim of the current study is to build upon this research and provide further insight into the factors that influence the desire for cosmetic procedures by looking at body esteem, social comparison, gender and social media usage.

Body Esteem

Body esteem or body image is how an individual perceives their physical appearance and how this makes them feel. According to Slade (1994) body image is influenced by seven factors. These factors are 'history of sensory input to body experience, the history of weight change/fluctuation, cultural and social norms, individual attitudes to weight and shape, cognitive and affective variables, individual psychopathology, and biological variables.- (Slade, 1994, p. 500-501). Slade posits that body esteem is influenced by individual, historical, cultural and biological variables. Negative or low body esteem can have dangerous

consequences such as causing eating disorder symptomology (Vinkers, Evers, Adriaanse & de Ridder, 2012) and other serious mental health disorders.

A study examining the psychological factors that predict a desire to undergo cosmetic surgery by von Soest et al., (2006) carried out a survey firstly on 907 Norwegian women between the ages of 22 to 55. The survey was administered to a second group of 195 female prospective cosmetic surgery patients. The women in the first sample were asked in the questionnaire whether or not they had a desire to get cosmetic surgery, this was done in order to compare the women who wished to get cosmetic surgery and those that did not. Results found that body image and social acceptance of cosmetic surgery were the strongest predictors of cosmetic surgery motivation (von Soest, 2006). The results show the effect negative body image can have on an individual, motivating them to alter their appearance despite the risks and implications cosmetic procedures can have.

Further research in this area looking into the associations between considering a cosmetic procedure, body appreciation, media influence and participant demographics for females found that less body appreciation was a significant predictor of consideration of cosmetic surgery (Swami, 2009). Those who experienced low body appreciation were more likely to get a cosmetic procedure, similar to results in the previous study.

Contrastingly, a study examining interest in cosmetic surgery found that those interested in cosmetic procedures did not have lower body image than those who were not interested. 52,677 men and women from age 18-65 completed an online survey. The survey analysed whether gender, age, relationship status, body mass index or body image satisfaction influenced a person's interest in cosmetic surgery. The results suggested that the individuals who were interested in cosmetic surgery did not have significantly lower body image than those who were not interested. However, those interested in getting liposuction did suffer

from lower body image (Frederick, Lever & Peplau, 2007). These results contrast with previous studies. This conflicting evidence increases the interest of body image as a predictor for wanting cosmetic procedures. The current study hypothesises that negative body image will predict the likelihood of wanting a cosmetic procedure.

Social Comparison

Social comparison is how a person evaluates themselves based upon how they compare to other people. Social comparison processes 'include the desire to affiliate with others, the desire for information about others, and explicit self-evaluation against others (Taylor & Lobel, 1989, p. 569). In the age of social media, social comparison is increasing in its prevalence. On apps like Instagram users are constantly bombarded with content. Often pictures are edited with photoshop-technology, in turn, setting unrealistic standards.

A study looking at the interactions between Facebook use, social comparison, envy and depression found that Facebook use predicts different measures of social comparison and envy. It was also found that social comparison and envy had a positive association with Facebook use and as a result can cause mental health problems such as depression (Appel, Gerlach & Crusius, 2016). From the results of this study it is clear that social comparison can have serious effects on an individual's mental health. This study attempts to understand some of the impacts of social comparison both online and offline.

While social comparison can result in low self-esteem and mental health problems, simultaneously it can increase interest in cosmetic procedures. A study by Matera et al., (2018) examined social comparisons effect on 204 men's interest in cosmetic surgery. The study focused on examining the roles of different forms of peer influence, internalization, social comparison, and body dissatisfaction in men's interest in cosmetic surgery. Results revealed that social comparison was positively associated and significantly linked to men's

interest in getting cosmetic surgery, along with peer influence and body fat dissatisfaction (Matera et al., 2018). Social comparison is shown to have significant influence on one's desire to alter the appearance. However, this study was done on males only, so it is necessary to examine if both males and females are affected the same way.

As well as comparing themselves to peers many individuals compare themselves to social media influencers and celebrities. While many are aware that these comparisons are unrealistic due to the celebrity's disposable income and access to beauticians and surgeons it does not stop these comparisons from happening. A fascinating study found that at the height of Kim Kardashian and Nicki Minaj's fame in 2013 there was a 51% increase in breast augmentations, buttock lifts and augmentations and tummy tucks compared to any other surgeries at that time. The study also found that as Kim Kardashian's celebrity interest rose by 1%, the consumption of Kardashian style cosmetic surgeries increased by 2% (Wilson, 2018). It is understandable that people feel they must look a certain way to measure up with the unrealistic beauty standards the media praises in celebrities like these. Many people feel pressure to conform to society's beauty standards and are willing to undergo cosmetic procedures in order to fit in or feel attractive.

Aforementioned, the generalisability of previous findings has been limited due to many studies only including females in their samples. It would be interesting to see whether males are influenced by the same factors as women, for this reason males and females will be examined in the current study.

Gender

Throughout researching this topic, it is clear countless studies have been done on females in this area and the reasons why they may consider a cosmetic procedure but not as many are done on males. In fact, in general things like body image, self-consciousness and other image

related stresses seem to be associated with women. However, in studies done on men in this area results seem to show they experience similar feelings, while perhaps not to the extent that women experience these issues, nonetheless men struggle with image related anxieties too. A study was done to examine the effects of social media on appearance investment and cosmetic surgery desire in adolescent males and females. The sample included 604 Dutch adolescents aged 11-18. Results showed that social media positively predicted the desire to get cosmetic surgery but indirectly through appearance investment. Interestingly, these results applied both to the male and female adolescents and were not moderated by their gender (de Vries et al., 2014). High social media use predicted the desire to get a cosmetic procedure, but the results were equal for males and females.

Males may also have similar predictors of wanting cosmetic procedures. A study looking at the factors affecting men's attitudes towards cosmetic surgery found significant results. One hundred and fifty-one males who had applied for a cosmetic procedure and 151 males who had not, completed a questionnaire. Results showed that lower body image satisfaction, frequent television viewing, frequent social media use and higher degrees of masculine gender related stress were all predictors of attitudes toward cosmetic procedures (Abbas & Karadavut, 2017). In studies mentioned previously low body image, frequent television viewing and social media use were all predictors of a desire to get a cosmetic procedure in females. The only new predictor for males was the degree of masculine gender related stress. Many men experience anxiety around their masculinity and feel they must behave and look masculine. Men who felt they did not live up to the masculine body ideal were more likely to want a cosmetic procedure (Abbas & Karadavut, 2017). The predictors in this study show that men experience similar worries as females when considering cosmetic procedures, with perhaps even extra anxieties regarding their masculinity.

However, there are studies that provide conflicting evidence. One study focusing on the views of men and women about cosmetic surgery across the lifespan found contrary results. The results found that 48% of women were interested in getting a cosmetic procedure and 23% were possibly interested. While only 23% of men were interested and 17% possibly interested (Frederick, Lever & Peplau, 2007). While there were men and women interested in altering their appearance, the percentages of women who were interested were higher. In the current study both males and females will be examined however, the hypothesis is that females will be more likely to want cosmetic surgery.

Media Usage

In some of the studies mentioned previously, television and social media proved to be predictors of wanting to get a cosmetic procedure. This is unsurprising as the media has such a big influence on people's lives in today's society. Seventy two percent of teens and 59% of internet users between the ages of 18 and 29 use Instagram (Aslam, 2019). A study was done to examine the effects reality television viewing has on the desire to get a cosmetic procedure. One hundred and seventy-eight participants did a questionnaire which evaluated the impression they had of reality television shows that featured cosmetic surgery, appearance satisfaction, self-esteem, and how interested they were in cosmetic surgery. The results found that participants who reported approving impressions of reality television shows featuring cosmetic surgery were more likely to show an interest in getting a cosmetic procedure (Markey & Markey, 2010). A second study was done with 189 participants where half the participants viewed a television show that featured a cosmetic surgery makeover and the other half viewed a neutral message. The results found that those who viewed the television show featuring a cosmetic surgery makeover were more likely to want to alter their appearance using cosmetic surgery than those who viewed the neutral message (Markey & Markey, 2010). Again, this shows the significant impact media consumption has, if one were

to consume a lot of this content it may greatly impact their mental health and could influence them to make decisions they wouldn't have otherwise.

Comparable results were found in a study looking at motivations to getting cosmetic procedures by Walker et al. One hundred and eighteen young females between the ages of 18-29 took part. Participants were randomly shown either images of facial cosmetic enhancements or images of travel. Those who viewed the images of cosmetic enhancements were more likely to desire a cosmetic procedure and even more so if they spent a lot of time on social media, followed multiple accounts, and if they were unhappy with their appearance (Walker et al., 2019). This study shows how easily and quickly people are influenced by viewing just one set of images. Frequent time spent on social media and following multiple accounts also predicted being unhappy with appearance. This study demonstrates the harmfulness of frequent viewing of social media, something which the majority of people do every day.

A related study found similar results. The study focusing on acceptance of cosmetic surgery found blog viewing positively predicted a desire for cosmetic surgery. One hundred and ten Swedish adolescents were studied. Results reported that younger adolescents were more accepting of cosmetic procedures and females who were frequent viewers of fashion blogs reported higher thin ideal internalization and were more likely to consider a cosmetic procedure (Lunde, 2013). However, this study was conducted in 2013 when fashion blogs were more popular than they are now. Fashion blogs now have developed into influencer fashion pages which are more frequently seen on social media apps like Instagram. It would be interesting to see the results if the study were repeated today and if influencer Instagram pages now have the same effect that the fashion blogs had in the Lunde (2013) study.

Another issue with social media and cosmetic procedures is reliability and legitimacy. A study examining cosmetic surgery videos and viewers responses found several risks of cosmetic surgery promotion online. The study found from examining cosmetic surgery related videos online that most videos put an emphasis on the benefits of cosmetic surgery and rarely addressed any potential risks involved. They also found cosmetic surgeons used their social media to aggressively promote their practices. Tactics of persuasive communication were used in these videos (Wen, Chia & Hao, 2015). It is clear there is elements of direct and indirect promotion of cosmetic surgery on social media. These can be extremely dangerous and glamourize cosmetic procedures, when in fact there are great risks to assess if considering an aesthetic procedure. The current study will examine by questionnaire if high social media usage is a predictor of wanting a cosmetic procedure done, due to social media's huge presence in modern life today.

Body Esteem and Social Comparison

Sociocultural theories suggest that body dissatisfaction emerges from unrealistic societal ideals (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2004). Exposure to appearance related media and appearance related peer conversations can attribute to low body esteem (Clark & Tiggemann, 2007). The relations between body image satisfaction and social comparison to same sex peers or media models were examined in adolescent boys and girls. Perceptions of attractiveness were recorded for 9th and 10th grader males and females. The attractiveness attributes were then used when 7th and 10th graders revealed social comparisons to models and or celebrities and same sex peers. Their body dissatisfaction was also recorded. Results found that celebrities and or models and same sex peers were used as comparisons for physical attractiveness. Results also discovered weight comparisons to peers and models, or celebrities correlated with low body satisfaction for males and females. On average, girls reported more social comparisons (Jones, 2001).

A similar study examining the role of media in relation to body dissatisfaction, investigated the effects of exposure to idealized beauty images on adolescent girls' and boys' body image. Five hundred and ninety-five adolescents were exposed to television advertisements featuring images of female thin ideals, male muscular ideals or non-appearance related advertisements. Body dissatisfaction was measured before and after. Results found that exposure to appearance idealized advertisements was related to decreased body dissatisfaction for females (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2004).

The current study seeks to further investigate the relationship between low body esteem and social comparison in females.

Aims

Undeniably, the demand for elective cosmetic procedures has risen dramatically and is continuing to do so. The aim of this study is to discover what motivates people to desire cosmetic procedures. It is possible there may be underlying mental health issues such as body dysmorphia occurring in an individual if they feel strongly the need to change multiple things about their appearance. A study found that 7-15% of patients wanting a cosmetic procedure met the diagnostic criteria for body dysmorphic disorder (Crerand, Franklin & Sarwer, 2006). Some individuals may just want to improve their appearance for increased confidence, but researchers have suggested inclusion of mental health checks and screening prior to an individual seeking an elective cosmetic procedure. The individual's distress and disability with the cosmetic problem should be examined and their attitude towards it (Castle, Honigman & Phillips, 2002). If the individual is suffering from a mental health disorder like body dysmorphia, surgery will make little or no difference to how they feel about themselves. Treatments such as pharmacotherapy and cognitive-behavioural therapy have shown to be more effective in treating body dysmorphia (Crerand, Franklin & Sarwer, 2006). While the

majority of cosmetic surgery patients are satisfied (Honigman, Phillips & Castle, 2004) there is little research on the improvement of psychosocial functioning and psychological well-being in the long term (Castle, Honigman & Phillips, 2002).

If the variables that motivate someone to get a cosmetic procedure are better understood, education can be provided on why they might feel this way and if it is the right choice for them. Previous studies mentioned above have discovered clear links in low body image/ body esteem, comparison behaviour, gender differences and media usage as predictors of wanting a cosmetic procedure. The generalisability of previous findings has been limited as many studies have only included females in their samples. Previous studies suggest males are possibly influenced by the same factors as women, it is essential to examine both and for this reason males and females will be examined in the current study. Based on previous research, this study will investigate if body esteem, social comparison, gender and social media usage are associated with wanting a cosmetic procedure. A number of hypotheses were also suggested based on the literature. This will be done using a questionnaire. Participants will be asked general demographic questions such as gender and if they are over 18, followed by a body esteem scale (Mendelson, Mendelson & White, 2001) , a social comparison scale (Allan & Gilbert, 1995) and a social media use scale developed from the Bergen Facebook addiction scale (Andreassen, Torsheim, Brunborg & Pallesen, 2012). Lastly a Likert scale question asking how likely the participant would be to get a cosmetic procedure will be asked.

Hypotheses

H1: There will be a significant relationship between low body esteem and wanting a cosmetic procedure.

H2: Females will be more likely to want a cosmetic procedure.

H3: There will be a significant relationship between high social media use and wanting a cosmetic procedure.

H4: There will be a significant relationship between negative social comparison and wanting a cosmetic procedure.

H5: Females with low body esteem will have negative social comparison.

Methodology

Participants

Anyone over the age of 18 could participate in this study, giving a wide variety of participants. The participants were selected through convenience sampling. A link to the online survey was posted on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. The survey was also passed on using snowball sampling through WhatsApp group chats, friends and family. One hundred and fifty-six people took part in the survey. Sixty males took part (38.5%) 95 females (60.9%) and 1 person preferred not to identify their gender (0.6%). Participants ages were not recorded but participants were required to state whether they were over 18, only those over 18 could participate.

Design

The design of this study was a quantitative correlational design. An online questionnaire was used because of its accessibility, ability to reach a large number of people and its efficiency. The questionnaire recorded participants body esteem, social comparison rates, social media usage and willingness to get a cosmetic procedure. The questionnaire also recorded gender. The relationships between these variables were then compared using SPSS 26. The first hypothesis of this study is that there will be a significant relationship between low body esteem and wanting a cosmetic procedure. Body esteem being the dependent variable (DV) and wanting a cosmetic procedure being the independent variable (IV). Hypothesis two is that females (DV) will be more likely to want a cosmetic procedure (IV). Hypothesis three is that there will be a significant relationship between high social media use (DV) and wanting a cosmetic procedure (IV). Hypothesis four is that there will be a significant relationship between negative social comparison (DV) and wanting a cosmetic procedure (IV). The last

and fifth hypothesis is that females (DV) with low body esteem (DV) will have negative social comparison (IV).

Materials

The materials used in this study consisted of a questionnaire (Appendix 2) starting with demographic questions such as gender and whether the participant was over 18. The demographic questions were then followed by different scales measuring body-esteem, social comparison, social media use and whether they would consider getting a cosmetic procedure. As well as a questionnaire, an information sheet (Appendix 1) and debrief sheet (Appendix 3) were used in the study. The study used social media websites and apps such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp to recruit participants.

The first scale used was the body esteem scale (Mendelson & Mendelson, 2001). This scale is a 21-item scale measuring body esteem. Participants are presented with a statement and asked to respond using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from never to always. Scoring is done by adding up the points received by each answer. Never =1, Seldom =2, Sometimes =3, Often =4 and Always= 5. Questions 4, 7, 9, 10, 12, 16 and 17 are reversed scored; for example, Never =5. The lowest score possible is 21 and the highest score being 105. The higher the score the higher the participants body esteem is. An example of a statement in this scale is 'I like how I look in pictures.' The full scale provides an acceptable level of internal consistency reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91. (Mendelson & Mendelson, 2001). This scale also includes three sub scales examining weight, appearance and attribution. The weight sub scale evaluates how the participant feels about their weight, items 3, 4, 8, 10, 16, 18, and 19 are accredited to weight. This sub scale had an acceptable Cronbach's alpha of .56. The appearance sub scale evaluates how satisfied the participant is with their appearance, items 1, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17 21 are assigned to appearance. The sub scale had an acceptable

Cronbach's alpha of .90. The last sub scale attribution measures how much the participant attributes other people's judgement of their appearance, items 2, 5, 12, 14, and 20 are accredited to attribution. This sub scale also had an acceptable Cronbach's alpha of .66. (Mendelson & Mendelson, 2001).

The second scale in this questionnaire was the social comparison scale (Allen & Gilbert, 1995). This scale is a 11-item scale which measures how a person compares themselves socially. Participants are asked to rate how they feel in relation to others on a scale of 1 to 10. For example, participants are asked do they feel 'unlikeable 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10 or more likeable'. Answers 1-4 would be closer to unlikeable and 7-10 being closer to more likeable. The lowest possible score is 11 and the highest possible score is 110. Scores are added using the numbers chosen in each question, lower scores predict the participant classifies themselves as inferior to others and having generally low self-conception in comparison to other people. The scale provides an acceptable level of internal consistency reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.88. (Allen & Gilbert, 1995).

The third scale used in the questionnaire was an adaption of the Facebook Bergen Addiction scale (Andreassen, Torsheim, Brunborg & Pallesen, 2012). This is a 6-item scale which measures how addicted one is to Facebook. For the purpose of this study the questions were changed to focus on social media rather than just Facebook. So instead of asking questions about Facebook they were asked about social media. For example, instead of asking how often in the last year you felt an urge to use Facebook more and more? Participants were instead asked 'how often in the last year you felt an urge to use social media more and more?' Participants were presented with a statement regarding social media and asked to respond using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from very rarely to very often. Scoring was done by adding up all the points received by each answer. Very rarely =1, Rarely =2, Sometimes =3, Often =4, Very often =5. The lowest score possible being 6 while the highest being 30

indicating a high social media use/addiction. The scale has a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.82. (Andreassen, Torsheim, Brunborg & Pallesen, 2012).

The questionnaire ends with a question asking, 'How likely would you be to get a cosmetic procedure to change your appearance?'. The participants were asked to answer on a Likert scale with the options extremely unlikely, unlikely, neutral, likely and extremely likely.

Procedure

Before the study could be conducted ethical approval was needed from the Dublin Business School Ethics Committee. Once the study was approved and any necessary changes were made the study was ready to begin. The questionnaire was designed using Google Forms. A link to the questionnaire was then posted online to Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and WhatsApp and passed around using snowball and convenience sampling. By clicking on the link participants were brought to Google forms where an information page (Appendix 1) about the study was shown. Participants were briefed in detail about the study and were assured of complete anonymity throughout. Because of this anonymity the participants were made aware that once the questionnaire was completed their information could not be withdrawn. The contact information of the researcher and researcher's supervisor were provided at the end of the information page. The participants were asked if they consented to their data being used and if they were over the age of 18. If they selected no to either of these questions, the questionnaire ended for them. The participants were then asked the questions from each scale and provided with instructions on how to answer. The survey took an average time of four minutes and 18 seconds to complete. After the participant had completed the questionnaire they were thanked and provided with phone numbers and emails of some mental health service providers in case the questionnaire brought up any negative feelings. They were again provided with details of the researcher and researcher's supervisor in the

event the participant had any queries regarding the study (Appendix 3). Once the number of participants needed for the study was obtained the questionnaire was then closed. The data from Google Forms was downloaded onto Excel and coded. It was then transferred to SPSS 26 and was again coded and computed. The appropriate statistical tests were run, and the results were interpreted.

Ethics

Before the study took place, it had to be deemed ethical by the DBS Ethics Committee. Once the study was approved many measures were put in place to assure all participants would be treated ethically. The study was conducted in line with the DBS Ethical Guidelines and with the PSI Code of Ethics. Participants were briefed about the study in detail prior to the questionnaire and provided with contact information of the researcher and researcher's supervisor. They were reassured of complete anonymity and made aware that data could not be withdrawn once submitted. Participation was completely voluntary no incentives were provided. Participants were also reassured their data would be stored safely. Participants were asked if they were over 18 and if they gave consent for their data to be used before completing the questionnaire and if they selected no, the questionnaire would immediately finish. At the end of the questionnaire a debrief sheet was provided thanking the participant for their participation and phone numbers and emails of support service providers such as Samaritans were given at the end.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The results of the study were analysed using SPSS version 26. The hypotheses were answered using One-Way Between Groups analyses, Linear Regression and a Mann Whitney U. There were, a total of 156 participants including 60 males (38.5%) , 95 females (60.9%) and 1(0.6%) who preferred not to say. This is represented in table 1 below. All participants were over the age of 18.

Table 1: Gender Frequency Table

	Male	Female	Prefer not to say	Total
Frequency	60	95	1	156
Percent	38.5	60.9	1	100.0
Valid Percent	38.5	60.9	.6	100.0
Cumulative Percent	38.5	99.4	100.0	

As seen in Table 1, there were more females than males and only 0.6% preferred not to disclose their gender.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Psychological Measures

	Body Esteem Total	Social Comparison Total	Bergen Facebook Addiction(adapted) Total
Mean	63.37	55.88	17.36
Median	65.00	56.00	18.00
Mode	67.00	51.00	20.00
Std. Deviation	13.38	16.04	5.29
Variance	179.03	257.35	27.99
Skewness	-.204	-.147	-.193
Kurtosis	-.649	-.278	-.605
Range	64.00	85.00	22.00
Minimum	31.00	15.00	6.00
Maximum	95.00	100.00	28.00
Cronbach's Alpha	.902	.909	.820

As seen in Table 2, the mean, median, mode, standard deviation, variance, skewness, kurtosis, range, minimum, maximum and Cronbach's alpha of the three measures are presented. The mean score for the body-esteem total was (M=63.37, SD=13.38), showing that the mean was a moderate score. The mean score for the social comparison total was (M=55.88, SD=16.04), showing the mean score was also moderate. The mean score for the Bergen Facebook addiction was (M=17.36, SD=5.29), demonstrating again, a moderate mean

score. The measures were tested for internal consistency using a Cronbach's alpha. All the measures achieved scores higher than the required .7 giving them a strong validity. These scores were also relatively consistent with the values reported in their original studies.

Inferential Statistics

H1: There will be a significant relationship between low body esteem and wanting a cosmetic procedure.

A one way between groups analysis showed that body-esteem differed significantly between the five groups ($F(4,143) = 8.44, p < .001$). More specifically Tukey HSD post hoc analyses highlighted that those who were extremely likely to get a cosmetic procedure had significantly lower body esteem than those who were extremely unlikely. (Mean difference = 15.98, $p = .001$, CI [95%] 24.85, 7.12). Those who were likely to get a cosmetic procedure had significantly lower body esteem than those who were extremely unlikely. (Mean difference = 9.62, $p = .001$, CI [95%] 17.51, 1.73). Those who were neutral about getting a cosmetic procedure had significantly lower body esteem than those who were extremely unlikely. (Mean difference = 12.41, $p = .001$, CI [95%] 21.82, 2.99). Those who were extremely likely to get a cosmetic procedure also had significantly lower body esteem than those who were unlikely. (Mean difference = 11.67, $p = .001$, CI [95%] 21.42, 1.99). Thus, highlighting that those who wanted to get a cosmetic procedure were more likely to have low body esteem. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

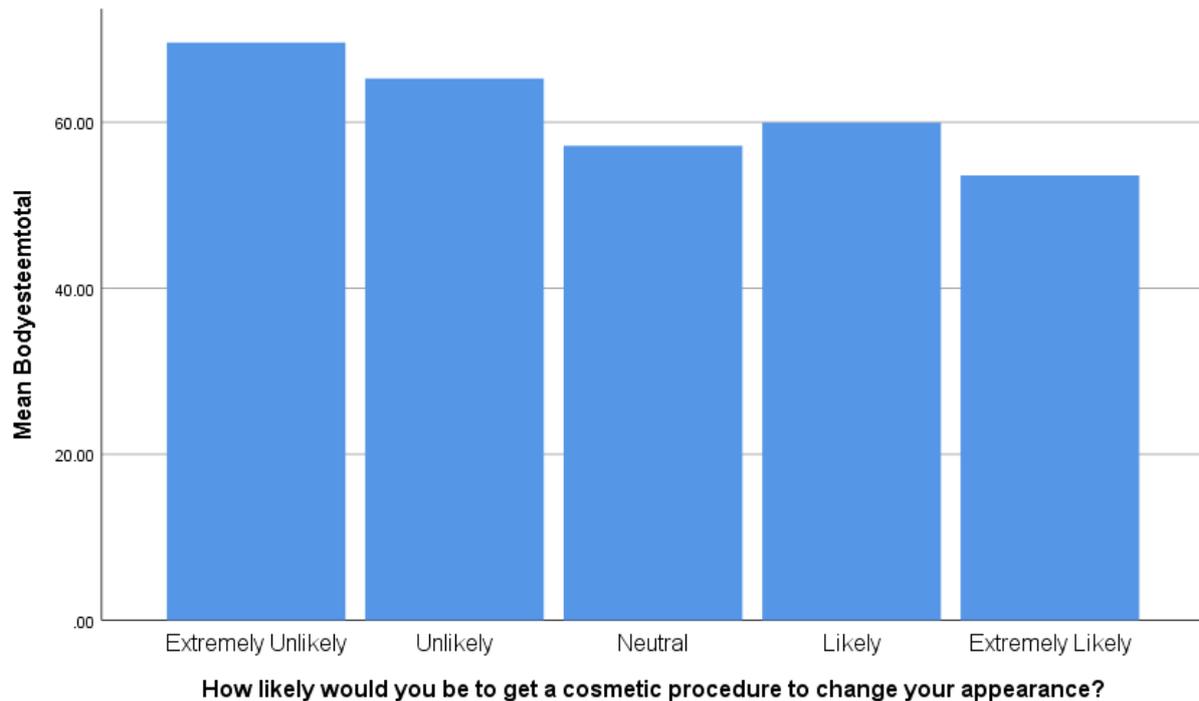


Figure 1: Bar chart showing the differences in body-esteem total across how likely participants were to get a cosmetic procedure.

As seen in the graph above those extremely likely to get a cosmetic procedure had the lowest body-esteem score and those who were extremely unlikely had the highest body-esteem score.

H2: Females are more likely to want to get a cosmetic procedure.

A Mann-Whitney U test revealed that the males (mean rank = 56.29) and the females (mean rank = 91.04) differed significantly ($z = 1547.500$, $p < .001$). Thus, showing that females are more likely to want to get a cosmetic procedure. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

H3: There will be a significant relationship between high social media use and wanting a cosmetic procedure.

A one way between groups analysis showed that social media use differed significantly between the five groups ($F(4,148) = 6.66, p < .001$). More specifically Tukey HSD post hoc analyses highlighted that those who were extremely likely to get a cosmetic procedure had significantly higher social media use than those who were extremely unlikely. (Mean difference = -5.15, $p = .001$, CI [95%]-1.6,-8.70). Those who were likely to get a cosmetic procedure also had significantly higher social media use than those who were extremely unlikely. (Mean difference = -4.23, $p = .003$, CI [95%]-1.08,-7.38). Those who were likely to get a cosmetic procedure and significantly higher social media use than those who were unlikely. (Mean difference = -3.80, $p = .029$, CI [95%]-.25,-7.35). Those who were extremely likely to get a cosmetic procedure had significantly higher social media use than those who were unlikely. (Mean difference = -4.72, $p = .009$, CI [95%]-.81,-8.62). Lastly those who were extremely likely to get a cosmetic procedure had significantly higher social media use than those who were neutral. (Mean difference = -4.46, $p = 0.47$, CI [95%]-0.4,-8.88). Those who used social media very frequently were more likely to want a cosmetic procedure. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

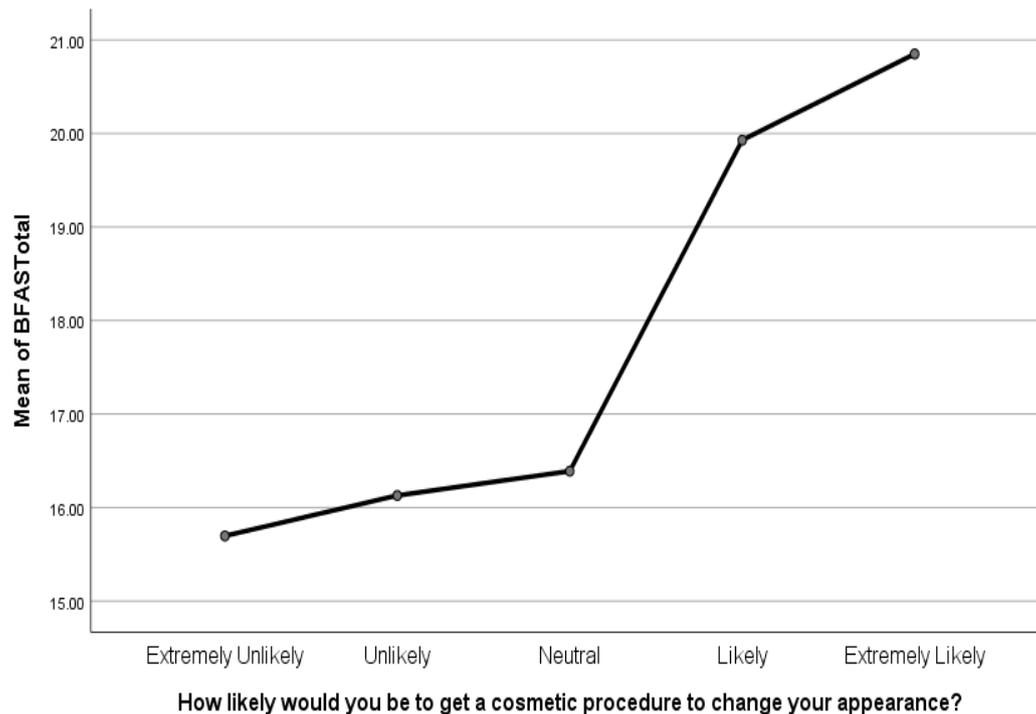


Figure 2: A means plot showing the social media use total of the participants and how likely they were to get a cosmetic procedure.

As seen above, those who were extremely likely to get a cosmetic procedure had much higher social media use to those extremely unlikely.

H4: There will be a significant relationship between negative social comparison and wanting a cosmetic procedure.

A one way between groups analysis showed that social comparison differed significantly between the five groups ($F(4,147) = 4.56, p = .002$). Those who were extremely likely to get a cosmetic procedure had significantly more negative social comparison than those who were extremely unlikely. (Mean difference = 15.21, $p = .002$, CI [95%] 26.10, 4.32). Those who had negative social comparison were more likely to want a cosmetic procedure. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

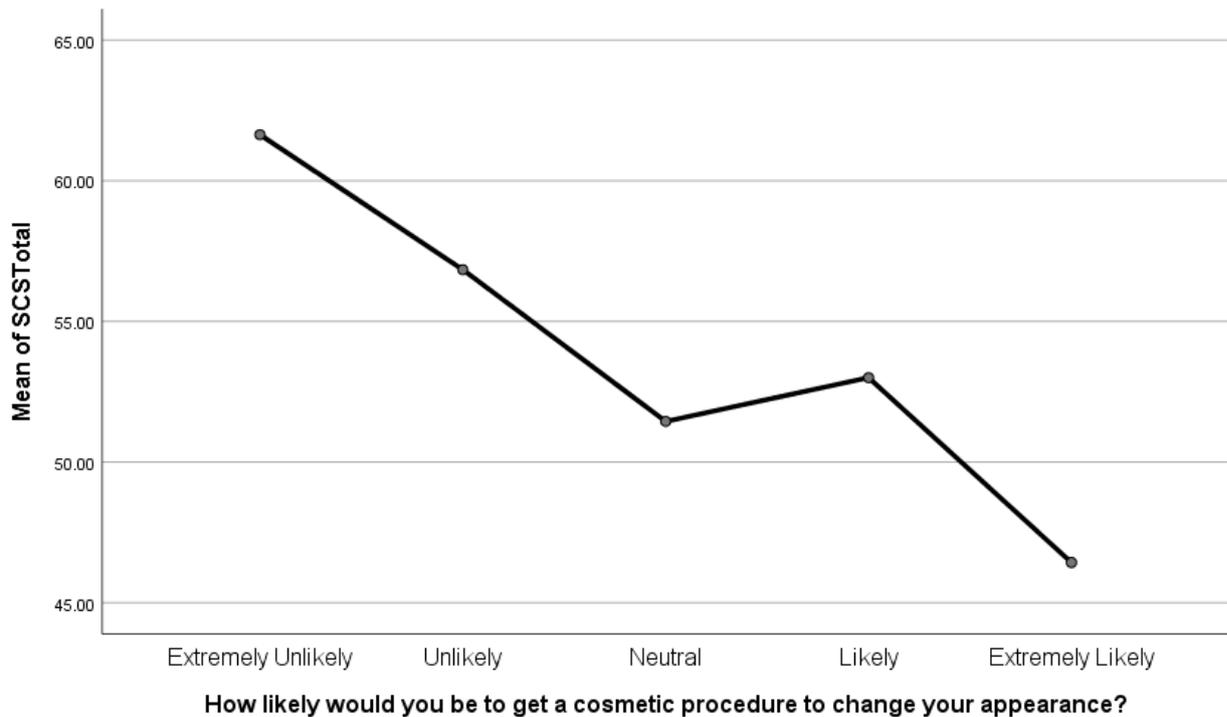


Figure 3: A means plot demonstrating those who compared themselves negatively to others were more likely to desire a cosmetic procedure.

As seen above, those who were extremely likely to get a cosmetic procedure compared themselves significantly more negatively to others than those who were extremely unlikely.

H5: Females with low body esteem will have negative social comparison.

Using simple regression, it was found that females with low body esteem significantly predicted having negative social comparison. ($F(1,87) = 77.27, p < .001$). (Social comparison, $\beta = .69, p < .001, CI [95\%] .62, .98$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion

Overview

The aim of this study was to investigate if body esteem, social comparison, gender or social media use had an influence on an individual's decision to get a cosmetic procedure.

Additionally, the study was interested in investigating whether females with low body esteem had negative social comparison. This was done by means of a questionnaire. Three scales were used in the questionnaire, the body esteem scale (Mendelson & Mendelson, 2001), the social comparison scale (Allen & Gilbert, 1995), an adapted version of the to analyse social media addiction Facebook Bergen Addiction scale (Andreassen, Torsheim, Brunborg & Pallesen, 2012). Lastly participants were asked how likely they were to get a cosmetic procedure. There were 156 participants, 95 females, 60 males and 1 person who preferred not to say. Overall, the study produced significant findings that support the proposed hypotheses and that are corresponding to previous research. These results will be discussed below.

Interpretation of Results

Hypothesis one was that there will be a significant relationship between low body esteem and wanting a cosmetic procedure. A one way between groups analysis found this to be significant. This is in agreement with previous research by von Soest (2006) which found negative body image to strongly predict wanting a cosmetic procedure and Swami (2009) who found low body appreciation was a predictor of wanting a cosmetic procedure. This is unsurprising as having low body esteem, low body appreciation or low body image all relate to being unhappy with one's body's physical appearance. Cosmetic surgery aims to change appearance and in turn possibly changing the individuals' feelings about their appearance. The von Soest (2006) and Swami (2009) studies had significantly larger sample sizes to the

current study however, the current study examined both males and females while the previous studies only investigated females. Also, in the Swami (2009) study only female undergraduates were considered making the age range much lower. Ages were not recorded in the current study but since convenience and snowball sampling were used it is probable that many of the participants were in the same age group as the researcher, possibly excluding older age groups and effecting the generalisability. Future research should record age, investigate males and females and have a large sample size to corroborate the previous and current findings.

Hypothesis two was that females will be more likely to want a cosmetic procedure. This was also found to be significant, if you are a female you may be more likely to want a cosmetic procedure. This supports previous research (Frederick, Lever & Peplau, 2007) where it was found a higher percentage of women were interested in cosmetic procedures than men. However, there were some males that did have a desire get a cosmetic procedure in the current study, similar to results found by Abbas & Karadavut, (2017) that men had similar predictors of a desire for cosmetic surgery as women and there were men who desired cosmetic procedures. Research by Frederick, Lever and Peplau (2007) examined approximately 52,000 participants with a wide age range of 18-65. Rather than examining cosmetic surgery as a whole they also examined interest in specific procedures such as liposuction. Although they found no significance in the difference between male and females desire for liposuction, different cosmetic procedures may produce different desires for males and females. The current studies hypernym of cosmetic procedures may have been too broad, participants may have answered differently if they were asked would they consider specific procedures.

Hypothesis three was that high social media use will predict desire for a cosmetic procedure. The results were found to be significant , high use of social media had a positive relationship

with the desire for cosmetic procedures. This is similar to previous research where it was found frequent viewing of fashion blogs predicted a desire for a cosmetic procedure (Lunde, 2013). While the type of social media differs slightly fashion blogs are now mostly present on Instagram as fashion pages. Similar results were also found (Walker et al., 2019) where those who viewed the images of cosmetic enhancements were more likely to desire a cosmetic procedure and even more so if they spent a lot of time on social media. Another study found that 72% of teens and 59% of internet users between the ages of 18 and 29 use Instagram (Aslam, 2019). Considering the amount of people that use social media and previous studies and the current studies results, social media could be one of the biggest factors contributing to the rise in cosmetic procedures being performed. The age ranges in both the current study and previous studies were relatively young, this age group is often associated with high social media and the internet use, this may have affected the generalisability of the study. However, it is also possible that it is not social media use in general that is predicting a desire for cosmetic procedures, but rather social media is allowing for more social comparisons to be made by imagery. Social media may not be the problem as such but social media as a medium for social comparison, future research should control for this.

The fourth hypothesis stated that negative social comparison will be a predictor of desire for cosmetic procedures. A one way between groups analysis found this to be significant.

Comparable to results found by Matera et al, (2018) where social comparison was positively associated and significantly linked to men's interest in getting cosmetic surgery (Matera, Nerini & Stefanile, 2018). This study only examined males while the current study investigated males and females. Another study (Wilson, 2018) found that there was a 51% increase in breast and buttock augmentations in 2013 at the height of Kim Kardashian and Nicki Minaj's fame. Moreover, the study found that as Kim Kardashian's celebrity interest rose by 1%, the consumption of Kardashian style cosmetic surgeries increased by 2%. Social

comparison could have been a reason for this, and this study shows the power social media has a medium of social comparison (Wilson, 2018). The current study did not consider the different effects of social media/celebrity and peer comparisons, future studies should consider the different psychosocial effects media social comparison and peer social comparison have.

The fifth and final hypothesis was that females with low body esteem will have negative social comparison. This was found using linear regression to be significant. Similar results were found in previous research (Jones, 2001). Results found that adolescents compared celebrities/models and same sex peers' physical attractiveness to their own. Weight comparisons to peers and models/celebrities correlated with low body satisfaction for males and females. It was found females were more likely to make social comparisons. The current study found that the female participants who suffered from low body esteem had a positive correlation with having negative social comparison. The study by Jones (2001) went a step further and examined the attributes that the participants were specifically comparing and that were possibly causing their low body esteem. The current study could have provided more insight into social comparison processes if an in-depth comparison survey was included to discover who they were comparing themselves too and what attributes they were comparing.

Strengths and Limitations

The current study had several strengths. Firstly, the survey used was broadly accessible for internet users being posted to Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and WhatsApp allowing for a wide range of participants. The study provided an adequate sample size of 156 participants, this provided more accurate mean values in the study. Smaller sample sizes have more of a chance of being skewed by outliers. The study used statistically reliable scales, all with a Cronbach's Alpha value higher than 0.7 in both the original studies and current study. Lastly,

a lot of studies concerning cosmetic procedures and issues such as body image have focused on females only (Matera, Nerini & Stefanile, 2018), (von Soest, 2006) and (Swami, 2009) while the current study investigated the effects these issues had on males as well.

Like all studies, this study had certain limitations. While publishing the survey online was a benefit to reach a large number of people, people who did not use the internet could not access the study thus limiting the number of participants. The study also did not allow anyone under the age of 18 to participate due to ethical reasons however, the issues investigated in this study could also apply to those under 18. A moderately higher number of females (60.9%) took part in the study than males (38.5%), which may have resulted in a slightly biased outcome.

Implications, Applications and Future Research

The findings of this study highlight the importance of psychosocial factors in one's desire to get a cosmetic procedure. It is important for both doctors and patients to be aware of the possible psychosocial factors that could be influencing the desire to have a cosmetic procedure done. The factors affecting one's decision to undergo cosmetic surgery may affect their subsequent mental well-being. The current study revealed those who seek cosmetic procedures tend to have correlations with a more negative self-perception, experiencing things such as low body image and negative social comparison. 7-15% of patients meet the diagnostic criteria for body dysmorphia (Crerand, Franklin & Sarwer, 2006) meaning cosmetic surgery may have no effect on their body dissatisfaction. For this reason, it is imperative mental health screening is done before all cosmetic procedures in order to avoid doctor and patient frustration and possible worsening of the patients' mental health. Further research should be done in order to investigate possible psychosocial factors related to not just desiring cosmetic procedures as a whole but the type of cosmetic procedure. (Frederick,

Lever & Peplau, 2007). This will allow for appropriate psychological screening to be implemented for different cosmetic procedures. Identification of suitable cosmetic surgery patients is needed and those who are not suitable should be referred to other means of treatment such as therapy. (Crerand, Franklin & Sarwer, 2006). While cosmetic surgery can be a successful treatment for those unhappy with their appearance (Honigman, Phillips & Castle, 2004), more research needs to be done on the affects it may have on psychosocial functioning and psychological well-being in the long term. (Castle, Honigman & Phillips, 2002).

Conclusion

To conclude, this study found that having low body esteem, negative social comparison, high social media use and being female had strong associations with the desire to get a cosmetic procedure. Moreover, the study found a clear link between females suffering from low body esteem and having negative social comparison. Further research should develop upon the factors that influence the desire for cosmetic procedures and examine the effectiveness of cosmetic procedures in reducing problematic psychosocial factors long-term. A suitable method of mental health screening for potential cosmetic surgery patients must be investigated. Effectiveness of the procedure and the method of mental health screening may also differ between different cosmetic procedures and this must be considered. These further investigations would highlight implications of certain influences in the desire for cosmetic surgery and allow for more effective and relevant treatments to be administered, whether it is a procedure or form of therapy. This study highlighted and identified psychosocial factors that have a strong correlation with the desire for a cosmetic procedure.

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Appendices

Appendix One

Information Sheet

My name is Sophie and I am conducting research in the Department of Psychology that explores the factors affecting individuals' desires to get cosmetic surgery. This research is being conducted as part of my studies and will be submitted for examination.

You are invited to voluntarily take part in this study. Your participation involves filling out the attached anonymous questionnaire. The questionnaire may ask some questions that could raise some minor negative feelings; however, they have been used widely in research. If the questionnaire raises any negative feelings for you, please find information for support services and their contact numbers/e-mails on the final page.

Participation is completely voluntary, and it is your choice whether to take part.

Participation is completely anonymous and private. Responses cannot be traced to any one participant. For this reason, it will not be possible to withdraw from the study once you have completed the questionnaire.

The questionnaires will be securely stored, and data collected will be stored on a password-protected computer and will be destroyed after 5 years.

It is important that you understand that by completing and submitting the questionnaire that you are consenting to participate in the study.

Should you require any further information about the research, please contact Sophie Redmond at [REDACTED]@mydbs.ie. My supervisor Rosie Reid can be contacted at [REDACTED]@dbs.ie. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Appendix Two

Questionnaire

1. Do you consent for your data to be used in this survey?

Yes

No

2. Are you over the age of 18?

Yes

No

3. Are you

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

4. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.

Never Seldom Sometimes Often Always

I like how I look in pictures.

Other people would consider me good looking.

I am proud of my body.

Never Seldom Sometimes Often Always

I am preoccupied with trying to change my body weight.	<input type="radio"/>				
I think my appearance would help me get a job.	<input type="radio"/>				
I like what I see when I look in the mirror.	<input type="radio"/>				
There are lots of things I'd change about my looks if I could.	<input type="radio"/>				
I am satisfied with my weight.	<input type="radio"/>				
I wish I looked better.	<input type="radio"/>				
I wish I looked like someone else.	<input type="radio"/>				
People my own age like my looks.	<input type="radio"/>				
My looks upset me.	<input type="radio"/>				
I'm as nice looking as most people.	<input type="radio"/>				
I'm satisfied with how I look.	<input type="radio"/>				
I feel I weigh the right amount for my height	<input type="radio"/>				
I feel ashamed of how I look.	<input type="radio"/>				

Never Seldom Sometimes Often Always

My weight makes me unhappy.	<input type="radio"/>				
My looks help me to get dates.	<input type="radio"/>				
I worry about the way I look.	<input type="radio"/>				
I think I have a good body.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

5.

Never Seldom Sometimes Often Always

I look as nice as I'd like to.	<input type="radio"/>				
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6. Please select a number at a point which best describes the way in which you see yourself. In relation to others I feel...

<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>									
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Inferior					Superior					

7. In relation to others I feel...

<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>									
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Unlikeable

More likeable

8.In relation to others I feel...

<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>									
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Left out

Accepted

9.In relation to others I feel...

<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>									
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Different

The same

10.In relation to others I feel...

<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>									
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Untalented

More talented

11.In relation to others I feel...

<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>									
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Weaker					Stronger					

12. In relation to others I feel...

<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>									
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Unconfident					More confident					

13. In relation to others I feel...

<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>									
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Undesirable					More desirable					

14. In relation to others I feel...

<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>									
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Unattractive					More attractive					

15. In relation to others I feel...

<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>									
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
An outsider						An insider				

16. Below you will find some questions about social media. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement. How often during the last year have you?

Very

Rarely Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

Spent a lot of time thinking about social media or planned use of social media?

Felt an urge to use social media more and more?

Used social media in order to forget about personal problems?

Tried to cut down on the use of social media without success?

Very

Rarely Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

Become restless or troubled if you have been prohibited from using social media?

Used social media so much that it has had a negative impact on your job/studies?

17.(A cosmetic procedure changes appearance through surgical and non-surgical techniques. This includes botox, fillers and more serious surgical procedures.)

Extremely

Extremely

Unlikely Unlikely Neutral Likely Likely

How likely would you be to get a cosmetic procedure to change your appearance?

Appendix Three

Debrief Sheet

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

If any topics in this questionnaire have affected you, please contact one of the support services below.

Samaritans at 116 123 or at jo@samaritans.ie

Aware at 01 661 7211 or supportmail@aware.ie

Or visit yourmentalhealth.ie

If you have any questions regarding the study, please contact me at [REDACTED]@mydbs.ie or my supervisor Rosie Reid at [REDACTED]@dbs.ie.

Thanks again for your participation.