

THE RISE OF COSMETIC SURGERY AMONG TEENAGERS: SOCIAL PRESSURE OR PERSONAL CHOICE?

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Abstract. In recent years, cosmetic surgery has become increasingly popular among teenagers, raising serious concerns about the factors influencing this trend. This study aims to investigate the underlying causes of the growing interest in cosmetic procedures among young people, focusing on social media influence, peer pressure, and self-perception. A survey-based method was employed to collect data from teenagers aged 16–20. The results indicate that cosmetic surgery is significantly more popular among females (85%) than males (15%). Social media was identified as the dominant factor influencing this trend (70%), followed by peer pressure (20%) and other factors (10%). Additionally, approximately 60–70% of respondents expressed a desire to improve their physical appearance. These findings suggest that the rise of cosmetic surgery among teenagers is largely driven by external societal pressures rather than purely individual choice. The study highlights the need for increased awareness and educational interventions to promote healthy body image among young individuals.

Keywords: cosmetic surgery, teenagers, social media, peer pressure, self-esteem, body image

Introduction. In the modern digital era, physical appearance has become an increasingly important aspect of identity, particularly among teenagers. With the rapid growth of social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat, young people are constantly exposed to carefully edited and idealized images of beauty. These platforms often promote unrealistic standards, creating a culture in which appearance is closely linked to self-worth and social acceptance.

As a result, cosmetic surgery, which was once primarily associated with adults, has become more common among teenagers. Procedures such as rhinoplasty, lip fillers, and skin treatments are no longer unusual topics of discussion among young people. This shift raises important questions about the motivations behind such decisions. Are teenagers choosing cosmetic surgery independently, or are they being influenced by external pressures?

This research aims to explore the main factors contributing to the rise of cosmetic surgery among teenagers. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following research question: To what extent is the increasing interest in cosmetic surgery among teenagers influenced by social media and peer pressure? By examining these factors, the study attempts to provide a deeper understanding of whether this trend reflects genuine personal choice or a response to societal expectations.

Methods. This study employed a quantitative research approach using a survey method to gather data from participants. The target group consisted of teenagers aged between 16 and 20, as this age group is particularly vulnerable to social influence and identity formation.

The survey included questions designed to measure:

- interest in cosmetic surgery
- perceived reasons for considering such procedures
- influence of social media
- role of peer pressure

Participants were asked to select the main factor that influenced their opinion about cosmetic surgery. The options included social media, peer pressure, and other factors such as personal preference or family influence.

The collected data were analyzed using percentage-based statistical methods. This approach allowed for a clear comparison of the relative importance of each factor and helped identify dominant trends within the responses.

Although the sample size was limited, the findings provide valuable insights into the attitudes and perceptions of teenagers regarding cosmetic surgery. The study focuses on general patterns rather than making broad generalizations, aiming to highlight key tendencies within the selected group.

Results. The findings of this study reveal several important patterns regarding teenagers' attitudes toward cosmetic surgery.

First, there is a significant gender difference in interest levels. The data show that 85% of respondents were female, while only 15% were male, indicating that cosmetic surgery is considerably more popular among girls than boys. This suggests that societal beauty standards may place greater pressure on females to conform to specific physical ideals.

Second, when examining the causes behind this trend, social media emerged as the most influential factor, accounting for 70% of responses. Participants reported that exposure to influencers, celebrities, and edited images led them to compare their appearance with others, often resulting in dissatisfaction.

Peer pressure was identified as the second most significant factor (20%). Many respondents indicated that comments from friends or the desire to fit in socially influenced their perception of beauty and their interest in cosmetic procedures.

The remaining 10% of participants selected other factors, including personal preferences, family influence, or individual insecurities.

Finally, the results show that approximately 60–70% of respondents expressed a desire to improve their physical appearance. This finding highlights a widespread concern among teenagers about their looks and suggests that many are not fully satisfied with their natural appearance.

Discussion. The results of this study clearly demonstrate that the rise in cosmetic surgery among teenagers is strongly influenced by external factors, particularly social media. The fact that 70% of respondents identified social media as the primary cause indicates its powerful role in shaping modern beauty standards.

Social media platforms often present an unrealistic version of reality, where images are filtered, edited, and carefully curated. Teenagers, who are still developing their identity and self-esteem, may struggle to distinguish between real and artificial beauty. As a result, they may feel pressure to change their appearance in order to meet these unrealistic expectations.

Peer pressure also plays a significant role, although to a lesser extent. The desire to fit in and be accepted by others can lead teenagers to compare themselves with their peers and feel inadequate if they do not meet certain standards. This social comparison can negatively affect self-esteem and increase the likelihood of considering cosmetic procedures.

Another important issue highlighted by this study is the high percentage (60–70%) of teenagers who want to improve their appearance. This suggests that dissatisfaction with one's physical appearance is becoming increasingly common among young people. Such dissatisfaction may lead to long-term psychological consequences, including low self-confidence and anxiety.

These findings support the idea that cosmetic surgery among teenagers is not purely a matter of personal choice. Instead, it reflects broader societal pressures and cultural norms that prioritize appearance over other qualities.

Therefore, it is essential to address this issue at multiple levels. Educational institutions should focus on promoting positive body image and critical thinking skills, helping students understand the impact of media on their perceptions. Parents should also play a supportive role by encouraging self-acceptance and open communication. Additionally, stricter regulations on misleading advertising and digitally altered images could help reduce unrealistic beauty standards.

Conclusion. In conclusion, the rise of cosmetic surgery among teenagers is a complex and multifaceted issue influenced by social, psychological, and cultural factors. This study has shown that social media is the primary driver of this trend, followed by peer pressure and other minor influences. The significant gender difference further highlights the unequal pressure placed on girls regarding appearance.

The high percentage of teenagers who wish to improve their appearance indicates a growing dissatisfaction with natural beauty, which may have serious implications for their mental well-being.

Overall, the findings suggest that cosmetic surgery among teenagers is less about individual choice and more about responding to external pressures. Addressing this issue requires a collective effort from educators, parents, and policymakers to promote healthier and more realistic standards of beauty.

By raising awareness and encouraging self-acceptance, society can help reduce the pressure on young people and support their psychological well-being.

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