

Study reveals social media usage impacts the desire to undergo cosmetic procedures

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Social media platforms such as Snapchat and Instagram have been pivotal in perpetuating "selfie" culture, whereby an individual takes and shares a photo of themselves. Globally, social media usage has been increasing, with at least 3.5 billion using social media in 2019. As of 2018 the average adult was spending 6.3 hours per day on an internet connected device. A particularly troubling consequence of an increase in

social media usage is the effect it has on body perception and self-esteem.

The angle of the "selfie" photographs taken for social media often distorts [facial features](#) in a way that leads to dissatisfaction. Medical professionals have reported a phenomenon of "Snapchat dysmorphia," whereby patients seeking cosmetic procedures attempt to emulate filtered and edited versions of themselves.

A new study by researchers at Boston University Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine has found that time spent on social media and the use of photo-editing applications correlates with a person's desire to undergo cosmetic procedures, and likely led to the increase in cosmetic visits seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. They also found patients who followed and engaged with celebrities and influencers on social media, as well as following and engaging with [plastic surgery](#), [dermatology](#) or other accounts showing the results of cosmetic procedures on social media significantly influences the desire to have a cosmetic procedure done.

The [work](#) appears in the *Journal of Clinical and Aesthetic Dermatology*.

"While there was an increase in cosmetic focus during the COVID pandemic, until now there has not been data highlighting a clear link or factors that made patients more or less likely to participate in cosmetic treatments," explained corresponding author Neelam Vashi, MD, associate professor of dermatology at the school and director of the Boston University Cosmetic and Laser Center at Boston Medical Center.

The researchers asked patients at a dermatology clinic to complete surveys (October 2019 through June 2021) regarding their social media usage as well as their desire to undergo cosmetic procedures. After reviewing these surveys, they found that the number of hours individuals

spent using Snapchat and/or Instagram every day had a statistically significant difference in the belief that media or social media had influenced their desire to have a cosmetic procedure done.

Furthermore, they found a statistically significant difference between the use of photo editing applications such as FaceTune, Lightroom, or SnapSeed to edit photos before sharing selfies on social media and thoughts about undergoing a surgical or non-surgical cosmetic procedure.

According to the researcher, this study indicates that practitioners ought to discuss social media usage with their patients to better understand the desire to undergo [cosmetic procedures](#). "Quality care begins with quality conversations, and we hope this study encourages providers to ask about all aspects of a patient's life to better understand their motivations and goals of care," said Vashi.

More information: Iman F. Khan et al, [Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic On Patient Social Media Use and Acceptance of Cosmetic Procedures](#), *Journal of Clinical and Aesthetic Dermatology* (2024)

Provided by Boston University School of Medicine

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