

The Influence of Social Media Addiction and Emotion Regulation on Body Image and Cosmetic Surgery Desire in Women

Azizollah Reshadi Mohammadi¹, Fariba Hafezi^{1*}, Farzaneh Hooman²

1.Department of Psychology, Ahvaz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Ahvaz, Iran

2.Department of Psychology, Shiraz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shiraz, Iran

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Corresponding Author:

Dr. Fariba Hafezi

Email:

fhafezi@gmail.com

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Abstract

Background: The rise of social media has significantly impacted how individuals perceive themselves and present themselves to the world. This is particularly concerning for women, who are often bombarded with idealized images of beauty standards that can lead to body dissatisfaction and a desire for cosmetic surgery.

Aim: This study aimed to investigate cosmetic surgery tendencies in women in Ahvaz City (Iran) based on social media addiction and emotion regulation through the mediating role of body image.

Methods: The research sample included 200 women who underwent cosmetic surgery in 2022-2023 and were selected using a convenience sampling method. The data collection tools included the Body Image Questionnaire, the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire, the Social Media Addiction Questionnaire, and the Cosmetic Surgery Tendencies Questionnaire. SPSS version 22 and Amos version 20 software were used for data analysis.

Results: The results indicated robust positive associations between social media addiction and both cosmetic surgery desire and body image among women ($P < 0.001$). Conversely, significant negative correlations were found between emotion regulation and both body image and cosmetic surgery desire ($P < 0.001$). Mediation analyses revealed that body image significantly mediated the relationships between social media addiction and cosmetic surgery desire, as well as emotion regulation and cosmetic surgery desire ($P < 0.001$). The proposed model demonstrated a satisfactory fit to the data, as evidenced by acceptable fit indices (RMSEA= 0.073, IFI= 0.90, CFI= 0.90, GFI= 0.90).

Conclusion: This study provides valuable insights into the complex interplay between social media addiction, emotion regulation, body image, and cosmetic surgery tendencies in women. The findings underscore the mediating role of body image in these relationships and emphasize the need for interventions that promote healthy body image and emotional regulation skills among women.

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Introduction

Our modern world places a significant emphasis on physical appearance, with the body acting as a key player in shaping social interactions and self-perception (1). Individuals, particularly women, are driven by a universal desire for beauty and social acceptance. This societal focus on aesthetics has intensified in recent times, fueled by the

consumerist culture that permeates modern life (2). Consequently, managing and manipulating one's body has become a prominent concern. This phenomenon manifests in various ways, and one increasingly common trend among women is cosmetic surgery (3). Understanding the factors that influence women's decisions to undergo cosmetic procedures is crucial, as it

allows us to explore the complex interplay between societal pressures, self-image, and the pursuit of physical perfection (4).

The rise of social media has undeniably transformed how individuals perceive themselves and present themselves to the world. This is particularly concerning for women, who are constantly bombarded with images showcasing unrealistic beauty standards (5). These carefully curated portrayals on social media platforms can fuel a relentless cycle of comparison and dissatisfaction with one's own appearance. Furthermore, the pervasiveness of social media has blurred the lines between aspiration and expectation (6). Physicians have capitalized on this trend, employing targeted advertising strategies to attract potential patients to cosmetic clinics. Social media allows them to showcase dramatic "before and after" photos, creating the illusion that achieving these idealized aesthetics is readily attainable (7). Furthermore, many social media users actively seek out content related to cosmetic surgery. They browse and follow hashtags to observe others' transformations, fostering a sense of normalization and potentially influencing their decision to pursue similar procedures (8, 9). A growing body of literature indicates a strong association between excessive social media use and the inclination toward cosmetic surgery, especially in younger populations (10-12). These findings underscore the detrimental impact of social media on body image and its potential contribution to the escalating prevalence of cosmetic surgical interventions among women.

Beyond the influence of social media, a critical factor driving women's desire for cosmetic surgery is their body image (13). Body image is a multifaceted concept encompassing not just how we see ourselves physically, but also our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors related to appearance. It is a cornerstone of mental and physical health (14, 15). Women with negative body image, characterized by dissatisfaction and self-consciousness about their bodies, are

more likely to consider cosmetic surgery as a solution (16). This negative self-perception can be a breeding ground for anxiety, depression, and even eating disorders (17). Conversely, a positive body image offers a multitude of benefits. Women who are comfortable and confident in their skin tend to engage in healthier lifestyles, including regular exercise, balanced diets, and proper self-care. They also experience higher levels of self-esteem, self-worth, and overall well-being (18). Understanding the interplay between body image and cosmetic surgery is crucial, as it suggests that addressing negative self-perception could be a more sustainable approach to promoting body acceptance and potentially reducing reliance on surgical procedures.

The escalating incidence of cosmetic surgery, predominantly among women, underscores the imperative for a comprehensive exploration of its associated factors. Although the impact of social media on body image dissatisfaction is widely acknowledged, the synergistic effects of social media addiction and emotion regulation on the propensity for cosmetic surgery remain elusive. This study sought to bridge this knowledge gap by examining the potential mediating role of body image. Specifically, the research investigated the influence of social media addiction and emotion regulation on cosmetic surgery tendencies in women, with a focus on the intervening role of body image.

Methods

The present study utilized a descriptive correlational research design to examine the interrelationships between social media addiction, emotion regulation, body image, and cosmetic surgery inclination among women. The target population consisted of women seeking cosmetic surgery who visited aesthetic clinics in Ahvaz, Iran, between 2022 and 2023. Convenience sampling was utilized to recruit a sample of 200 participants from the eligible population. Recruitment involved visiting

aesthetic clinics and dermatology centers in Ahvaz and approaching individuals who had undergone cosmetic surgery or were seeking consultation. Participant inclusion criteria comprised women aged 20 to 50 years who provided informed consent, had a history of or current interest in cosmetic surgery, and possessed a minimum educational attainment of middle school. Conversely, participants who exhibited non-compliance or submitted incomplete data were excluded from the study. All research procedures adhered to established ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Confidentiality of data was maintained throughout the research process.

Instruments

Cosmetic Surgery Tendencies Questionnaire (CSTQ)

The Cosmetic Surgery Tendencies Questionnaire (CSTQ) (19) was employed to assess cosmetic surgery tendencies among the study participants. The CSTQ is a 24-item self-report measure employing a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Total scores, calculated by summing item responses, yield a range of 24 to 120, with higher scores indicative of greater cosmetic surgery inclination. The instrument's internal consistency reliability, assessed by Cronbach's alpha, was reported as 0.79 in the original study by Etemadifard and Amani (19). Furthermore, the construct validity of the CSTQ was supported through confirmatory factor analysis, yielding a factor loading of .76. In the present study, a pilot test was conducted with 30 participants to determine the internal consistency reliability of the CSTQ. The obtained Cronbach's alpha value was 0.73, indicating adequate reliability for use in this research.

Mobile Social Networking Addiction Questionnaire (MSNAQ)

The Mobile Social Networking Addiction Questionnaire (MSNAQ) (20) is a self-report instrument comprising 23 items that assess the

severity of mobile social networking addiction. Participants rate items on a 5-point Likert scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." The MSNAQ encompasses four dimensions: individual functioning, time management, self-control, and social relationships. The questionnaire demonstrated robust content validity (content validity ratio= 0.95) and construct validity (construct validity ratio= 0.86) (20). Internal consistency reliability, as measured by Cronbach's alpha, was found to be 0.85.

The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ)

The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) (21) is a self-report measure assessing cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. Utilizing a 7-point Likert scale, the ERQ comprises six items for reappraisal and four for suppression. The Persian adaptation of the ERQ has demonstrated robust internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.91$) (22). The current study yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87 for the ERQ, indicating adequate reliability for the present research.

The Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire (MBSRQ)

The Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire (MBSRQ) (23) is a self-report measure comprising 68 items designed to assess various body image dimensions. Ten subscales evaluate appearance, fitness, health, body area satisfaction, and weight-related concerns. A 5-point Likert scale is used for responses, with higher scores indicating greater positive body image. The psychometric properties of the MBSRQ, including validity and reliability, have been established as satisfactory by Shemshadi et al. (24). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient we obtained was 0.79, which suggests the measure possesses an acceptable level of reliability for this study.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS Statistics 22.0 and AMOS 20.0 software packages. Descriptive statistical analyses were conducted

for all variables. To evaluate the hypothesized mediation model, structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed.

Results

The mean ($\pm$ SD) age of the participants was 32.56 ($\pm$ 6.10) years. In terms of educational level, participants reported the following: secondary education (middle school and high school) ($n = 46$, 23.0%), post-secondary education (diploma) ($n = 52$, 26.0%), bachelor's

degree ($n = 80$, 40.0%), and master's degree or higher ($n = 24$, 11.0%).

Additionally, 62 participants (31.0%) were employed, while 138 participants (69.0%) were homemakers. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics (mean, SD, skewness, and kurtosis) of the study variables. As evident from the table, the values for skewness and kurtosis for all numerical study variables fall within the range of -2 to +2, suggesting that the data distribution approximates a normal distribution.

Table 1. Mean, standard deviation (SD), skewness, and kurtosis

Variables	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Cosmetic surgery tendencies	67.52	16.54	0.39	0.37
Social media addiction	82.85	19.09	0.24	0.11
Emotion regulation	38.65	11.77	0.15	-0.27
Body image	141.13	35.31	-0.17	-0.08

Table 2 presents the fit indices for the proposed model. The obtained values for RMSEA (0.073), IFI (0.90), CFI (0.90), and GFI (0.90) indicate a satisfactory model fit. The hypothesized model examining the mediating

role of body image in the relationship between social media addiction and emotion regulation on cosmetic surgery tendencies is visually depicted in Figure 1.

Table 2. Fit indicators in the research model

Fit indicators	χ^2	df	(χ^2/df)	CFI	IFI	GFI	RMSEA
Model	219.58	198	2.87	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.073

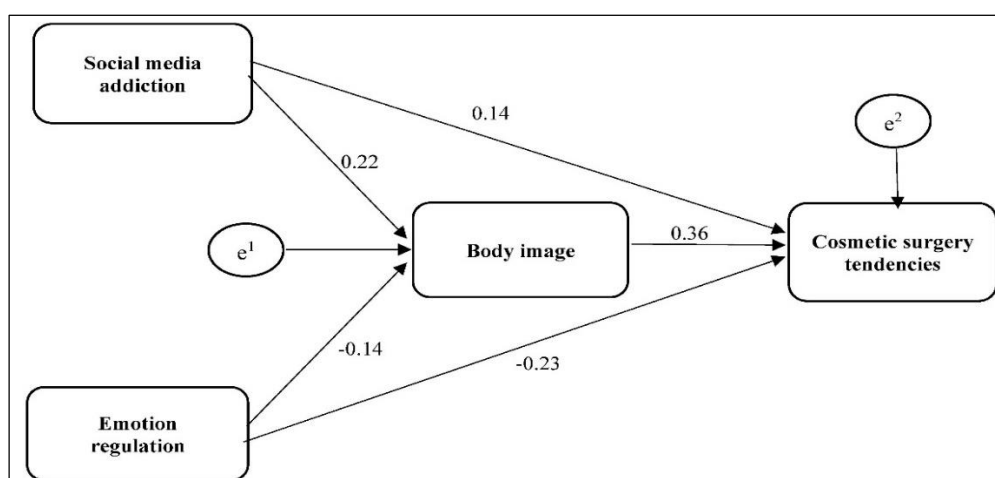


Figure 1. Path model of the mediating role of body image in the association between social media addiction, emotion regulation, and cosmetic surgery tendencies

Table 3 presents the standardized path coefficients representing direct and indirect effects among the study variables. The results indicate significant positive relationships ($P < 0.001$) between social media addiction and both cosmetic surgery tendencies and body image dissatisfaction in women. Conversely, a significant negative correlation ($P < 0.001$) emerged between emotion regulation strategies and body image dissatisfaction, as well as between emotion regulation and cosmetic surgery tendencies. Further analysis employing

mediation models confirmed that body image significantly mediated the relationship between social media addiction and cosmetic surgery tendencies ($P < 0.001$) and between emotion regulation strategies and cosmetic surgery tendencies ($P < 0.001$). These findings suggest that social media addiction may lead to negative body image, which in turn increases the desire for cosmetic surgery. Additionally, difficulties in regulating emotions may also contribute to body image dissatisfaction and a greater tendency to pursue cosmetic procedures.

Table 3. Path coefficients of direct and indirect effects between studied

Path	β	P
Social media addiction → Cosmetic surgery tendencies	0.14	0.001
Emotion regulation → Cosmetic surgery tendencies	-0.23	0.001
Social media addiction → Body image	0.22	0.001
Emotion regulation → Body image	-0.14	0.001
Body image → Cosmetic surgery tendencies	0.36	0.001
Social media addiction → Cosmetic surgery through the mediating role of body image	0.59	0.001
Emotion regulation → Cosmetic surgery tendencies through the mediating role of body image	0.21	0.001

Discussion

The present study examined the complex interplay among social media addiction, emotion regulation, and cosmetic surgery tendencies in women, with a specific focus on the mediating role of body image. Findings revealed a significant positive association between social media addiction and cosmetic surgery inclination, corroborating existing research that underscores the adverse effects of excessive social media use on psychological well-being and body image (7, 9). The pervasiveness of social media platforms and the constant engagement they demand have fostered an environment conducive to addiction. As individuals become increasingly reliant on these platforms for social validation and self-expression, the boundaries between healthy engagement and problematic use blur (5). This phenomenon, termed "social media addiction," manifests through excessive time

spent on social media, preoccupation with online activities, and a sense of loss or discomfort when unable to access these platforms (7). The negative consequences of social media addiction extend beyond psychological distress, encompassing a heightened susceptibility to cosmetic surgery procedures. Social media, with its curated and often unrealistic portrayal of beauty standards, can fuel body dissatisfaction and a desire to conform to these idealized images (10). This, coupled with the pervasive marketing of cosmetic procedures on social media platforms, creates a fertile ground for individuals to seek surgical alterations to their appearance. The allure of cosmetic surgery is often presented as a quick fix for perceived body flaws, promising enhanced self-esteem and social acceptance. However, the reality is far more complex. Cosmetic procedures can carry significant risks and may not always achieve the desired results, potentially leading to further dissatisfaction and

emotional distress (25). Moreover, the pursuit of cosmetic surgery as a means to address underlying body image issues can be a futile endeavor, as it fails to address the root causes of these concerns.

The study further revealed a significant positive association between social media addiction and body image among women, consistent with previous research (26, 27). While social media has become an integral part of contemporary life, serving as a platform for information, social interaction, and self-expression, its pervasive influence has been linked to negative psychological outcomes. The curated and often unrealistic depiction of beauty ideals on these platforms has been implicated in fostering body dissatisfaction and the desire to conform to unattainable standards (28). This phenomenon, termed "body image distortion," can lead to feelings of inadequacy, shame, and low self-esteem. The pervasiveness of social media marketing for cosmetic procedures further exacerbates this issue. Cosmetic surgery is often presented as a quick fix for perceived body flaws, promising enhanced self-esteem and social acceptance.

The findings of this study revealed a significant mediating role of body image in the relationship between social media addiction and cosmetic surgery tendencies among women. This finding highlights the complex interplay between these factors and underscores the importance of addressing body image concerns as a means to mitigate the potential negative effects of social media addiction on cosmetic surgery tendencies. Social media platforms have become ubiquitous in modern society, serving as a primary source of information, social connection, and self-expression. However, this pervasive presence has also raised concerns about its potential negative effects on psychological well-being, particularly about body image (5). The curated and often unrealistic portrayal of beauty standards on social media can fuel body dissatisfaction and a desire to conform to these idealized images.

This phenomenon, termed "body image distortion," can lead to feelings of inadequacy, shame, and low self-esteem (14). The pervasiveness of social media marketing for cosmetic procedures further exacerbates this issue. Cosmetic surgery is often presented as a quick fix for perceived body flaws, promising enhanced self-esteem and social acceptance.

The present study demonstrated a significant negative direct relationship between emotion regulation and both body image and cosmetic surgery inclination among women. Moreover, body image was found to significantly mediate the relationship between emotion regulation and cosmetic surgery tendencies. These findings corroborate previous research emphasizing the interconnectedness of emotion regulation, body image, and cosmetic surgery pursuit (29). Studies have demonstrated that individuals with poor emotion regulation skills are more likely to experience body dissatisfaction and engage in maladaptive coping mechanisms, such as cosmetic surgery, to manage their emotions (30). Emotion regulation refers to the ability to monitor, evaluate, and modify one's emotional responses in a healthy and adaptive manner. Individuals with strong emotion regulation skills are better equipped to manage stress, cope with negative emotions, and make rational decisions (29). Conversely, those with poor emotion regulation skills may struggle to manage their emotions effectively, leading to impulsive or maladaptive behaviors, such as cosmetic surgery (31).

While this study offers significant contributions, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. The utilization of a convenience sample of women who had already undergone cosmetic surgery may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research could benefit from a longitudinal design to establish causal relationships and explore the long-term psychological effects of cosmetic surgery. Additionally, investigating the specific types of cosmetic surgery sought and their correlation

with social media influences could provide further insights.

Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the complex interplay between social media addiction, emotion regulation, body image, and cosmetic surgery tendencies in women. This study identified social media addiction and poor emotional regulation as factors influencing cosmetic surgery desires in women, with body image acting as a key mediator. These findings highlight the importance of promoting healthy body image and emotional regulation skills to reduce reliance on cosmetic surgery for appearance concerns. Additionally, social media platforms have a role to play in fostering responsible use and realistic beauty standards. Addressing the issue of cosmetic surgery tendencies requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses promoting emotion regulation skills and enhancing body image. Psychoeducational interventions can teach individuals effective emotion regulation strategies, such as cognitive restructuring, relaxation techniques, and problem-solving skills. Additionally, promoting body positivity and fostering self-acceptance can help individuals challenge unrealistic beauty standards and develop a more positive and realistic perception of their bodies.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Ethics

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Ethical Committee of the Islamic Azad

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Authors ORCIDs

Azizollah Reshadi Mohammadi

<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-9719-2234>

Fariba Hafezi

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8673-2549>

Farzaneh Hooman

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9706-7740>

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