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Original Research Article

Does the current generation's smile esthetics hinge on social media and cosmetic makeover? A questionnaire-based study

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Smile esthetics for today's generation is an absolute necessity. It has been etched in people's minds to present their best selves to gain acceptance from their peers. Social media with its filter/lens feature, photo editing options, and circulation of idealized celebrity photos have left a deep scar on the self-image of people. This has made individuals resort to cosmetic makeovers as a coping mechanism.

Materials and Methods: 2 previously validated questionnaires were used. Specific items from both questionnaires were taken up which would fit the questionnaire while maintaining its essence. The final questionnaire was divided into 2 domains to understand the influence of social media and smile makeover individually. It comprised of 10 questions which were circulated via google form.

Result: 100 responses were received for the circulated questionnaire. For the social media domain, majority did not compare their smiles with that of others; were not very confident when it came to showing their smile on social media; often noticed the smile of others; and felt they had a good smile of their own. There was an even distribution when asked if they were conscious of their smile. For the cosmetic makeover domain, majority didn't feel the need to get cosmetic procedures and were not influenced by social media into getting one.

Conclusion: Results showed social media to have a big influence on improving smile esthetics. However, the same cannot be said for the desire of getting a cosmetic makeover as the majority didn't feel the need for it.

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1. Introduction

In today's society, smile esthetics has become a dominant concern associated with inter-personal relationships. There is a strong correlation between facial appearance and social attractiveness that is well documented in the literature. The "What is beautiful is good" concept states that attractive people derive social benefits attributable to their appearance because of physical stereotyping. Goldstein stated that facial smile ranks second only to the eyes as the most prominent feature affecting facial attractiveness. It is assumed that attractive people are more likely to get higher-paying, more

prestigious jobs and are more intelligent. This thought process has made the younger generation believe that their smile is nothing less than a fashion statement. Teenagers are bombarded with images on various media platforms about the supposed 'smile esthetics and how this can be achieved in different ways.

The effect of social networking sites on adolescents' lives and mental development is important to investigate given the role these sites currently play in their lives. Today's generation has been taken over by social media with the majority of the time being spent surfing, sharing, and editing media. Photo manipulation on these platforms is seen as a necessity.^{1,2} The idea of portraying oneself according to

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the ideal beauty standards has led to facial dissatisfaction among many. Unknowingly, it has become a source of perpetual social pressure among today’s generation to always present their “ideal” but “unnatural” self in terms of facial/smile esthetics. Constant exposure of personal life and the compelling urge to receive attention and approval from peers can take a toll on a person’s self-esteem and confidence if the desired response is not achieved.

With the rise of social media, there has been a dramatic increase in demand for cosmetic dental treatment.³ Direct access to celebrity and influencer profiles who all appear to have the “perfect smile”, has caused a shift in people’s self-image in terms of seeking cosmetic treatments. This may be reflective of online trends and a greater emphasis placed on esthetics and appearance. The recent and ongoing pandemic uncovered another facet of smile dissatisfaction. Social anxiety and stress were reported to have multiplied several folds when looking at one’s own projected image with that of others.⁴ Concern regarding the smallest of details was being pointed out, which would have been probably overlooked in normal circumstances. This creates a demand for esthetic results which are not realistic. Social acceptance and facial satisfaction have been the driving force behind cosmetic makeover. Social media platforms like Snapchat, and Instagram have introduced the use of “filters” which allows users to alter their appearance drastically.⁵ These further raise concerns over self-image issues. Although filters were added to provide the userbase with something creative and fun, engaging with them or celebrity culture obsessively can lead to anxiety and depression in extreme cases.

The current literature talks about how a smile can be influenced by various social factors, but there is no specific questionnaire on it. This study aims to understand how social media and the growing trend of cosmetic makeovers influence smile aesthetics among today’s generation through combined validated questionnaires.

2. Materials and Methods

The questionnaire for the study comprised of two domains to assess the objective of the study –

1. Social media and smile satisfaction
2. Cosmetic procedures for smile

The questions for the two domains were obtained from previously validated questionnaires.

The influence of social media on smile satisfaction was deduced using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) and Socio-cultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-3 Scale (SATAQ-3). These questionnaires were slightly modified and 5 questions were chosen specifically to understand the role of social media while preserving the integrity of the actual scale.

To analyse whether cosmetic procedures have an effect on smile esthetics, Acceptance of cosmetic surgery, a 15-item questionnaire was used. It is divided into 3 categories – Intrapersonal, Social, and Consider. A total of 5 items were taken up which would fit our present study.

The final questionnaire to be circulated via google form comprised of 10 questions. A 10-point Likert Scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” was used. No particular inclusion or exclusion criteria were followed.

3. Result

100 responses were received for the circulated questionnaire. The age of participants ranged from 17 to 54 years, with the majority of the participants falling under the bracket of 21 to 25 years (Figure 1).

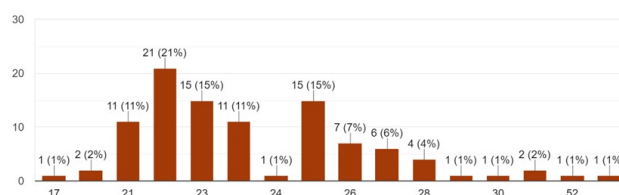


Fig. 1: Age of participants

For ease of understanding the different roles played by social media and cosmetic makeover on smile esthetics, the results will be discussed separately.

3.1. Social-media

In terms of social media influence, the majority of the participants responded by answering that they did not compare their smiles with that of others while using social media (Figure 2).

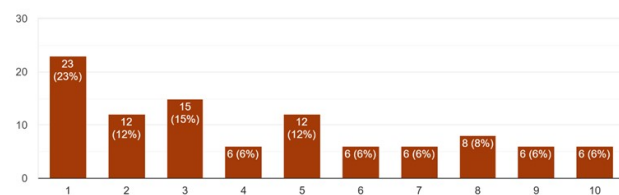


Fig. 2: When I use social media, I compare my smile with that of others

A significant number of participants (47%) were not very confident with their smiles when using social media (Figure 3).

Around 73% of the participants felt strongly that others did like their smile on social media (Figure 4).

There was a more even distribution (50%) when participants were asked whether they felt conscious while smiling on social media (Figure 5).

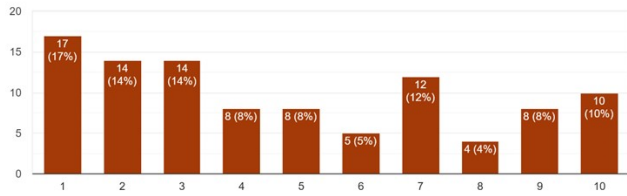


Fig. 3: When I use social media, I am worried about how my smile is

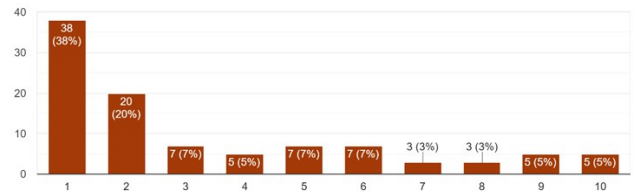


Fig. 7: I would seriously consider having cosmetic surgery if my partner would find me more attractive

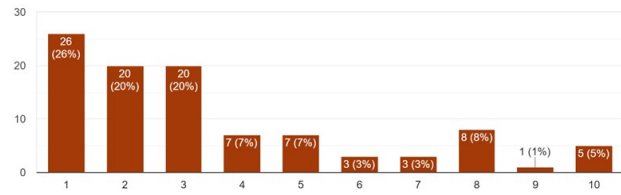


Fig. 4: When I use social media, I feel people don't like my smile

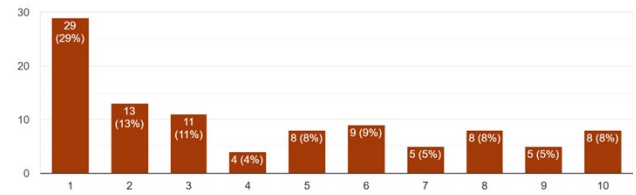


Fig. 8: If a simple cosmetic surgery procedure would make me more attractive to others, I would try it

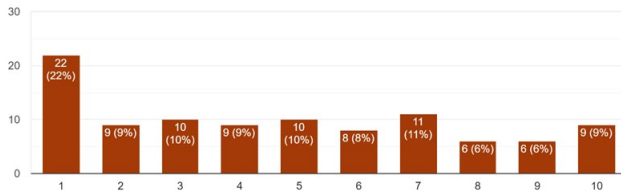


Fig. 5: When I use social media, I feel conscious about smiling in photographs

Around 64% of the participants don't believe that social media has influenced them into getting a cosmetic procedure done (Figure 9).

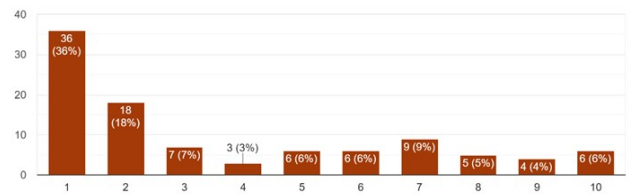


Fig. 9: I have sometimes thought about having cosmetic surgery after spending time on social media

Lastly, around 53% of participants felt that they focussed on the smile of others while using social media (Figure 6).

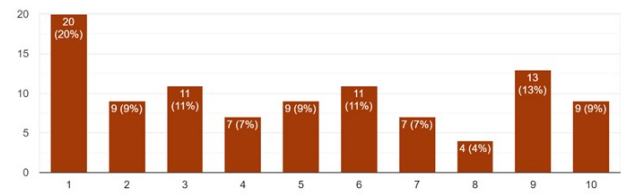


Fig. 6: When I use social media, I tend to focus on the smile of other people

The majority (58%) don't feel cosmetic procedures would enhance their self-esteem and confidence (Figure 10).

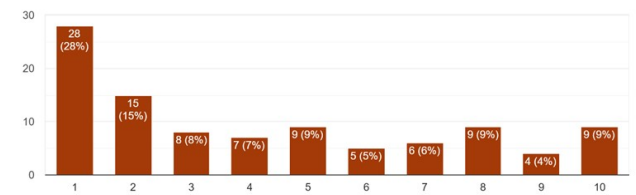


Fig. 10: Cosmetic procedure will improve my self-esteem and confidence

3.2. Cosmetic makeover

When asked about cosmetic procedures for improving smile esthetics, most of the participants had a very clear mindset.

More than 60% of the participants would not consider having cosmetic surgery even if it led to their partners finding them more attractive (Figure 7).

The majority would not undergo even a simple cosmetic procedure to look more attractive (Figure 8).

Most of the participants don't feel they need to undergo cosmetic procedures to improve their smiles (Figure 11).

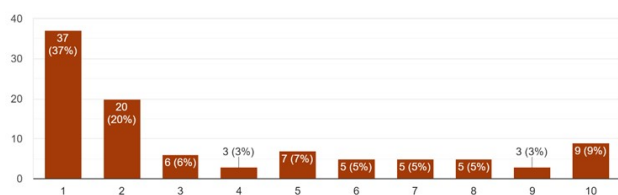


Fig. 11: I always felt the need to get cosmetic procedures done to improve my smile

4. Discussion

This study inspected the links between the influence of social media and cosmetic makeover toward smile esthetics. The findings of this study showed that social media was positively associated with the demand for smile esthetics more than cosmetic makeover.

4.1. Social media influence

The present study found social media to have a positive correlation with the need for smile esthetics. The results are in sync with various other studies where social media engagement was found to accentuate facial and smile dissatisfaction and hence promote smile esthetics.^{6,7} The reason for such an effect can be because of the unprecedented number of edited pictures which are uploaded by everyone daily to ideally portray themselves. Advertisements on social media by “influencers” adds to the ever-growing problem. These influencers with their enormous followers, market and promote cosmetics on their social media pages. This can serve as a constant reminder to people of the accepted norms of today’s generation who are constantly looking for validation from their real and virtual life peers which has given rise to people assessing the downsides of engaging in various social media platforms.

While most people choose to spend a large amount of their time on social media, on others it has been enforced to some extent because of the pandemic. Video calls, either in the form of online teaching or work-related calls on Zoom, have become part of the “new normal” life. Watching one’s face next to others on a daily basis unconsciously leads to facial esthetic comparisons. Moreover, the distorted video quality on such calls doesn’t reflect the true appearance which can further hamper the self-image of a person.⁴ The pandemic saw a surge in demand for smile esthetics which was rather unrealistic in terms of expectations. It is the need of the hour for ethical care providers to counsel the patient first before resorting to any other mode of interventional therapy.

4.2. Influence of cosmetic makeover

Social media has played a very significant role in creating a mindset where individuals have to always look their absolute best, and this has paved the way for cosmetic

procedures to become all the more sought after. Studies have reported how social media has hastened the desire for a cosmetic makeover.³ Moreover, the idea of being able to see the changes before actually getting it has always been a full-proof way of knowing what to expect. For understanding purposes, let us take the example of orthodontic treatments where one can look at the changes beforehand on virtual setups before getting the treatment done. Similarly, “filters”, “editing apps” etc allow individuals to beautify themselves which can sprout the desire of getting a cosmetic makeover.¹ In our study, the result shows a rather opposite mindset of people. Across all the 5 questions, the majority believe social media hasn’t convinced them to get cosmetic procedures done and feel no need to get them done to improve their smile.

If we talk about the different factors governing smile esthetics, we would find most of them stem from social media usage. Limiting social media usage might sound like the best possible way to tackle the situation but it’s not possible in today’s time where socializing and networking are also important. An alternate approach can be to educate people regarding the possible negative consequences and provide psycho-social help to anyone who is in need. Developing hobbies and keeping themselves occupied in recreational activities is probably the healthiest way of maintaining distance from the necessary evil, that social media has come to become.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the association between social media and cosmetic makeover over smile esthetics. Our results showed social media to have a big influence on improving smile esthetics which is congruous to other studies. However, the same cannot be said for the desire of getting a cosmetic makeover as the majority didn’t feel the need for it. More research is needed to understand if there are any prevalent gender differences and also a more elaborate questionnaire is needed to fully express the essence of the study and obtain a more concrete result.

6. Source of Funding

None.

7. Conflict of Interest


The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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