

Social media influence on self-image and motivation for cosmetic and plastic surgery in Kuwait

by

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B.S., Kuwait University, 2021

A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

A.Q. Miller School of Media and Communication

College of Arts and Sciences

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

Manhattan, Kansas

2024

Approved by:

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Abstract

This thesis explores the influence of social media on body image perceptions and the motivations for cosmetic and plastic surgery (CPS) among individuals in Kuwait. With the increasing presence of Western beauty standards on social media platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat, this research investigates how these standards affect body dissatisfaction and intentions to undergo CPS in a society that balances traditional values with modern beauty ideals.

The study uses the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to analyze the role of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in shaping CPS intentions within the Kuwaiti context. Other key variables included social media use, exposure to Western beauty standards, body image perceptions (both positive and negative), intentions to undergo CPS, beliefs regarding CPS, concerns and risks involved in CPS, and perceived subjective norms of CPS.

A quantitative approach was employed, with data collected through an online survey ($n=300$). The sample was composed of 128 men, 137 women, and 23 who preferred not to identify. Descriptive statistics were calculated, including percentages, means, and standard deviations. Correlation and regression analyses were conducted to test the hypotheses and answer the research questions.

The results show that frequent social media use was correlated with greater motivation for CPS. This was confirmed by significant correlations between social media use and attitudes ($r = .172, p < .01$), intentions ($r = .195, p < .01$), and beliefs regarding CPS ($r = .211, p < .01$). Exposure to Western beauty standards influences negative body image perceptions ($r = .636, p < .01$). Similarly, exposure to these beauty standards is positively correlated with attitudes toward CPS and intentions to undergo CPS, which was supported by the data ($r = .178, p < .01$ and $r =$

.287, $p < .01$, respectively). Results also show that subjective norms on CPS intentions, that is, support from friends and family significantly increased motivation to undergo CPS ($\beta = .293$, $p < .001$).

In testing the research questions results show significant differences in positive body image perceptions between those who had undergone CPS and those who had not. However, it was the subjective norms, especially social acceptance, and support from close circles, that significantly predicted intentions to undergo CPS ($\beta = .293$, $p < .001$). Lastly, identified beliefs about CPS and social motivations as strong predictors of CPS intentions, accounting for 40% of the variance in intention ($R^2 = .403$).

This study demonstrates the significant role of social media in shaping body image and influencing cosmetic surgery trends in Kuwait. These findings suggest that culturally sensitive interventions are needed to promote healthier body image perceptions and reduce the negative psychological impacts of social media-driven beauty ideals.

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Acknowledgments

I want to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Nancy Muturi, whose guidance, insights, and patience were invaluable in shaping this thesis. My sincere thanks also go to my professors and colleagues for their feedback and encouragement. I am incredibly grateful to my committee members, Dr. Samuel Mwangi and Dr. Anan Wan, for their support and expertise. Additionally, I extend my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Raluca Cozma and Dr. Katie Olsen, whose classes provided me with the knowledge and inspiration that significantly contributed to this work. Finally, I am thankful to all the participants who contributed to this research, making this study possible.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my family and friends, whose unwavering support and encouragement have been my greatest strength throughout this journey. A special thanks to my mom, Basemah Alrabieah, whose generosity and belief in me have made this possible. Your sacrifices and unwavering faith in my potential have been my guiding light.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

Cosmetic and plastic surgery (CPS) encompasses many procedures to enhance or restore physical appearance and function. CPS is often perceived primarily to enhance physical appearance and conform to societal beauty standards. However, these procedures can also be crucial in addressing various health-related issues, significantly improving patients' quality of life. Beyond the realm of aesthetics, cosmetic and plastic surgery encompasses reconstructive procedures designed to correct functional impairments and congenital abnormalities, as well as to repair damage caused by trauma or medical conditions. Procedures such as otoplasty can correct protruding or prominent ears, which might otherwise lead to psychological distress and social challenges, particularly in children. By reshaping the ear, otoplasty enhances appearance, boosts self-esteem, and reduces the likelihood of bullying and social anxiety (Greig et al., 2019).

Another critical application of plastic surgery is removing excess skin, often necessary after significant weight loss. Individuals who undergo bariatric surgery or other weight loss programs may experience large amounts of sagging skin, which can cause physical discomfort, skin infections, and mobility issues. Surgical interventions such as body contouring and panniculectomy help remove this excess skin, alleviating these health problems and facilitating a more active and comfortable lifestyle (Song et al., 2015). Furthermore, reconstructive surgeries, including breast reconstruction post-mastectomy and cleft lip and palate repair, are vital for restoring both function and appearance. These procedures address aesthetic concerns, enhance physical abilities like speech and eating, and contribute to overall psychological well-being (American Society of Plastic Surgeons, 2022).

The global prevalence of both health-issue-related and intentional CPS has been rising steadily, driven by increasing social acceptance, advancements in medical technology, and the influence of media and celebrity culture. According to data from the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ISAPS), millions of surgical and nonsurgical cosmetic procedures are performed worldwide yearly (ISAPS, 2024). The United States, Brazil, and South Korea are among the leading countries in the number of procedures performed (Steroidal et al., 2011).

In recent years, there has been a notable increase in the demand for minimally invasive procedures. The popularity of treatments such as Botox and dermal fillers has surged due to their accessibility and immediate results. Technological innovations, such as advanced laser therapies and new injectable materials, have also contributed to the growth of the CPS market (Harris, 1982). The rise of social media platforms has further amplified the visibility of cosmetic procedures, with influencers and celebrities frequently sharing their experiences and outcomes with a global audience (Gimlin, 2020). In Kuwait, CPS has gained significant traction and is influenced by traditional values and contemporary global trends. Kuwaiti society places a high value on appearance and personal grooming, which has fueled the demand for surgical and nonsurgical cosmetic procedures. The influence of Western beauty standards, perpetuated through media and social media, has also played a crucial role in shaping local attitudes towards CPS (Al-Awidi, 2023).

Cultural factors in Kuwait, such as integrating Bedouin traditions with modern lifestyles, have created a unique landscape for beauty standards. Traditional values emphasize modesty and natural beauty, while contemporary influences encourage the pursuit of aesthetic enhancements to align with global beauty trends. This duality is evident in the increasing number of individuals seeking CPS to improve their self-image and conform to societal expectations (Penn, 2020).

The popularity of social media platforms like Instagram has further accentuated the desire for cosmetic procedures in Kuwait. Many Kuwaitis follow beauty influencers and celebrities who endorse CPS, thereby normalizing and promoting these practices. This cultural shift has led to a greater acceptance of CPS and has made it a common pursuit among various age groups in the country. Overall, the interplay of traditional values, modern influences, and social media has shaped the evolving CPS landscape in Kuwait, reflecting broader global trends while maintaining distinct cultural characteristics.

Problem Statement

Social media has become a powerful force in shaping global beauty standards and body image perceptions. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok are filled with curated, often edited, images portraying idealized versions of beauty. These platforms encourage comparison behaviors, leading individuals to measure their appearance against these often unattainable images. Extensive literature shows that social media can significantly influence beauty perceptions and body image concerns (Henriques, 2020). This study explores how frequent social media use shapes individuals' attitudes toward body image, mainly through the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) lens. By focusing on social media use, the current research will investigate how users' engagement with these platforms influences their perceptions and attitudes towards body image and beauty standards, especially within Kuwait.

In recent years, body image issues have become more prevalent, primarily due to continuous exposure to idealized beauty standards on social media. This exposure has been linked to adverse psychological outcomes such as low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and eating disorders. For instance, studies have found that frequent social media use correlates with higher levels of body dissatisfaction and appearance anxiety, particularly among young women

(Wang, 2023). The current study seeks to understand how these attitudes and perceptions, shaped by social media exposure, influence users' views on cosmetic procedures, drawing from the TPB construct of attitudes.

The internalization of these beauty standards often leads to harmful behaviors, including extreme dieting, excessive exercise, and consideration of cosmetic and plastic surgery (CPS). The pressure to conform to idealized beauty images can be overwhelming, with many individuals feeling inadequate or unattractive if they do not match these images (Ma, 2023). This study will explore the factors contributing to this internalization, focusing on subjective norms outlined in the TPB. The research aims to understand how social influences from family, friends, and social media shape individuals' internalization of beauty ideals and their consideration of CPS.

There is a pressing need to examine the relationship between social media, body image, and intentions regarding CPS, particularly in cultural contexts such as Kuwait. While much research has focused on Western populations, the impact of social media on body image in Middle Eastern societies, where traditional values intersect with modern global influences, remains underexplored. This study addresses the gap by investigating the socio-cultural factors influencing body image and CPS intentions in Kuwait.

Overall, this research aims to fill the gap in the literature by providing a comprehensive analysis of how social media influences body image and CPS intentions in Kuwait, contributing to both academic knowledge and practical solutions. In addition, the study will be grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which offers a comprehensive framework for predicting and understanding behavior. TPB posits that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control guide behavior. In this context, the study will examine:

Attitudes: How social media exposure affects individuals' attitudes towards beauty standards and CPS.

Subjective Norms: The role of social pressures, including from family, peers, and social media influencers, in shaping body image perceptions and CPS intentions.

By applying the TPB, this research will uncover how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control shape Kuwaiti individuals' intentions regarding body image and CPS, contributing to a deeper understanding of the intersection between social media influence and health-related behavior.

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of social media on body image perceptions and intentions toward cosmetic and plastic surgery (CPS) among individuals in Kuwait, utilizing the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as the guiding framework. Specifically, the study explores how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, as shaped by social media exposure to global beauty standards, affect individuals' motivations and decisions to consider CPS. This research seeks to provide culturally relevant insights into the psychosocial factors driving body image concerns and CPS intentions in the unique socio-cultural context of Kuwait.

Study Gap and Justification

The influence of social media on body image and cosmetic surgery intentions has been extensively studied in Western contexts. However, there is a significant gap in the literature concerning how these dynamics play out in non-Western, culturally distinct settings such as Kuwait. This study addresses the need to explore the specific socio-cultural factors in Kuwait that influence perceptions of body image and motivations for cosmetic and plastic surgery (CPS)

under the influence of social media. The following gaps have been identified in existing literature that render their findings applicable to this thesis's context.

Cultural Specificity: Much of the existing research on the influence of social media on body image and CPS intentions is based on Western populations (Fardouly et al., 2015; Perloff, 2014). These studies often highlight the impact of Western beauty standards, which may not fully capture the unique cultural dynamics present in Kuwait. In Kuwait, a blend of traditional values and modern, global influences creates a distinct socio-cultural environment that may differently affect individuals' perceptions and behaviors related to body image and CPS (Al-Awidi, 2023).

The intersection of Traditional and Modern Influences: Kuwaiti society is characterized by a juxtaposition of traditional Islamic values and contemporary global trends. Existing studies do not typically address this duality, often focusing on more homogeneous cultural contexts. Understanding how this interplay influences body image and CPS motivations is crucial for providing culturally relevant insights (Penn, 2020).

Social Media's Role in Kuwaiti Context: While studies have explored social media's general influence on body image, limited research exists on its specific impact on Kuwaitis. The pervasive use of platforms like Instagram among Kuwaitis and the role of social media influencers in shaping beauty standards warrant a focused study to understand their unique effects (ALshammari, 2022).

Gender Dynamics: Existing research often does not delve deeply into how gender differences in Kuwait might influence the relationship between social media use and CPS intentions. Kuwaiti men and women may experience and respond to social media influences in

distinct ways, influenced by cultural norms and expectations specific to the region (Batoool et al., 2022).

Body dissatisfaction and the pursuit of unattainable beauty standards can have severe mental health implications, including anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. By understanding how social media influences these issues in Kuwait, this study can inform mental health interventions tailored to the local context, thereby promoting healthier body image perceptions. Insights from this research can guide policymakers in developing regulations for social media content related to beauty standards and CPS. This can help mitigate the negative impact of unrealistic beauty portrayals and promote more positive, diverse representations. For CPS practitioners in Kuwait, understanding the psychosocial factors driving individuals to seek cosmetic enhancements is crucial. This knowledge can improve patient consultations and ensure that motivations for CPS are well-understood, leading to better patient outcomes and ethical practice. This study's unique contributions, including theoretical and practical contributions, are outlined as follows.

Cultural Contextualization: This study extends the existing theoretical frameworks, such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), by applying them to a non-Western, culturally unique context. It provides a nuanced understanding of how traditional and modern influences influence body image and CPS intentions in Kuwait.

Policy Development: The findings can inform the creation of policies regulating social media content to promote healthier body image standards and reduce the prevalence of unrealistic beauty ideals.

Clinical Interventions: The study provides valuable insights for CPS practitioners, enabling them to understand better and address their patients' motivations and concerns, thereby enhancing the quality of care.

Educational Programs: The research can support the development of educational programs that foster critical media literacy among Kuwaiti social media users, helping them navigate and critically evaluate online content.

In conclusion, this study fills a significant gap in the literature by exploring the influence of social media on body image and CPS intentions within Kuwait's unique socio-cultural context. It offers theoretical and practical contributions that can enhance our understanding and inform interventions to promote healthier body image perceptions and responsible CPS practices.

Organization of the Document

This document is organized into five chapters, each addressing different aspects of the research process and findings.

Chapter 1: Introduction- This chapter overviews the research topic, including the background, problem statement, study purpose, research questions, and theoretical framework. It introduces the study's relevance and outlines the key objectives, focusing on the influence of social media on body image and cosmetic and plastic surgery (CPS) intentions in Kuwait.

Chapter 2: Literature Review—The second chapter reviews existing literature on social media's impact on body image, global beauty standards, and cosmetic surgery. It includes a detailed exploration of Kuwait's cultural context and how Western beauty ideals influence local perceptions. The chapter also examines the theory of planned behavior (TPB) and its application to health-related behaviors, particularly about body image and CPS.

Chapter 3: Methodology- This chapter outlines the research design, participants, data collection methods, and analytical techniques used in the study. It describes how the online survey was developed, administered, and analyzed using TPB constructs (attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control) to investigate the relationship between social media use and CPS intentions in Kuwait.

Chapter 4: Results—This chapter presents the study's findings, including descriptive statistics and inferential analyses. It highlights vital patterns and relationships between social media use, body image perceptions, and CPS intentions. The results of the TPB framework and research hypotheses are discussed.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion- The final chapter discusses the implications of the findings for theory, policy, and practice. It also addresses the study's limitations and suggests future research directions. The chapter summarizes the study's contributions to understanding social media's role in shaping body image and CPS intentions in Kuwait, offering recommendations for promoting healthy body image perceptions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter explores the complex relationship between beauty standards, body image, and social media's influence, focusing on cosmetic and plastic surgery (CPS) in Kuwait. It examines how social media affects individuals' intentions and behaviors regarding CPS across various cultural backgrounds. The chapter begins by differentiating between surgical and nonsurgical cosmetic procedures, detailing the benefits and considerations of each. It provides a historical perspective on the diversity of beauty standards across cultures, showing how they reflect deeper societal values, norms, and even economic and political contexts. Additionally, it analyses the influence of Western culture on global beauty ideals, primarily through media representation. Lastly, the chapter delves into the risks associated with CPS, highlighting the importance of informed consent and ethical communication by practitioners.

Surgical vs. Nonsurgical Procedures: Understanding the Options

Cosmetic surgery and non-surgical procedures are two main areas where people can alter their looks. Surgical operations include medical operations that permanently change a structure of the body, for example, breast enlargement surgery or aesthetic surgery, which takes longer and is risky, needs the use of anesthesia, and has a longer duration of rehabilitation (Kim & Ahn, 2012). According to Zojaji et al. (2014), cosmetic and plastic surgery advertisements lead to greater acceptance and approval of the surgery. The sphere of aesthetic medicine provides a great variety of services, from invasive to noninvasive treatments, each of which has advantages and drawbacks. To that effect, anyone considering going for any of these procedures must understand their fundamental difference. Figure 2.1 from Chang (2014) depicts the steps in aesthetic upper eyelid surgery, where a very complex incision is made to conduct changes in appearance. Figure

2.1(A) depicts the first part of the operation, where the superior palpebral eyelid has been cut through, and the redundant skin and tissue are excised. This step proves to be paramount in accomplishing the preferred eyelid crease and addressing ptosis.

Figure 2 1: Crease construction and wound closure (A) procedure completed, (B) Upper lid opened, (C) Completion of wound closure ([from Chang, 2014](#))



Figure 2.1(B) shows the patient's appearance two weeks after surgery. The eyelid has now been sutured, showing the proper overlap required to recreate the fold. Figure 2.1(C) indicates the state of the eyelid a few weeks after the surgery when sutures have been taken out, and the eyelid is more contoured and has a better shape. These stages expounded the active surgical process and the anticipated graduality from cutting to healing, which supports the efficiency of the technique for wrinkle removal.

On the other hand, non-surgical interventions like Botox injections or dermal fillers are comparatively safer with quick recovery, mild to moderate discomfort, and relatively shorter complications as compared to surgery. However, they are not permanent and require frequent touch-ups (Cavallini et al., 2014). Surgical rhinoplasty is one of the most common options to improve their noses' looks (Kim, 2012). Botulinum toxin A injections, also known as Botox, treat wrinkles because they are safe and effective (Cavallini et al., 2014). Different elements can be used instead of Botulinum Toxin for different CPS applications. Figure 2.2 shows a case study by Chirico (2021) of a 54-year-old female patient referred to their department for labial

incompetence management. A minimally invasive procedure using hyaluronic acid (HA) injections was proposed to enhance the appearance of her lips temporarily.

Figure 2 2: Mechanism of Action of labial incompetence management ([from Chirico et al., 2021](#))



To evert the lip and cover the lower teeth, 3 mL of HA filler was injected perpendicularly through the skin into the inner lip. Results were stable without touch-ups at 3- and 6-month follow-ups (Figure 2.2B and 2.2C). The findings show that the minimally invasive HA filler technique temporarily improved the patient's lip look without surgery. This approach emphasizes

the benefits of non-surgical cosmetic operations, especially when underlying health issues prevent surgery.

Historical Background of Beauty Standards Diversity Across Cultures

Beauty standards have always been as diverse and changing as the societies that produced them throughout history. These are not aesthetic standards only; they represent their society's culture and even sometimes the socio-economic and political system of their time. People's beauty standards changed dramatically in both directions across the spectrum, influenced by geographical location, period, and intercultural communication.

As noted by Konstan (2014), Naini (2011), and Parkison (2021), ancient beauty standards reflected virtues, power, and divine blessing. The Greeks admired balance and ratio, as these attributes were thought to be inborn among the gods, setting up a benchmark of beauty for Western art and aesthetics for centuries. The Renaissance era worshipped chubby figures, as they signified that a person could afford to eat often since starvation was a genuine concern.

In Eastern cultures, the beauty norms vary greatly. It is worth recalling that in historical China, foot binding was prominent because miniature feet were considered an integral part of the female image (Ko, 2005). This practice depicted a beauty standard that sidelined agility and strength to look slender and ladylike. However, in Japan, the Geisha adopted the application of white makeup, fashionable physique, gorgeous hairstyles, and kimonos, which are globally renowned for being symbolic of Japan's culture, though they do not depict the general Japanese measures of beauty that is prevalent today (Miller, 2006; Slade, 2009; Ragalye, 2012).

In contrast, Euro-American beauty standards have been identified to have historical roots in colonial and imperialism sets out. European colonizers brought their beauty standards to

colonized African societies during the colonial era, which also influenced the beauty standards of the societies (Chen et al., 2020). Other scholars, such as Marasca (2020) and Pieterse (2019), also stressed that whiteness is associated with superiority and desirability. These concepts were reaffirmed through books, paintings, and other written and artistic communications or scholarly studies. Such a system of race placement with the superior white Europeans at the top of the chain was thus maintained by economic domination and propagation of 'beauty standards' where white features were deemed beautiful and deserving of success (Hall, 2016).

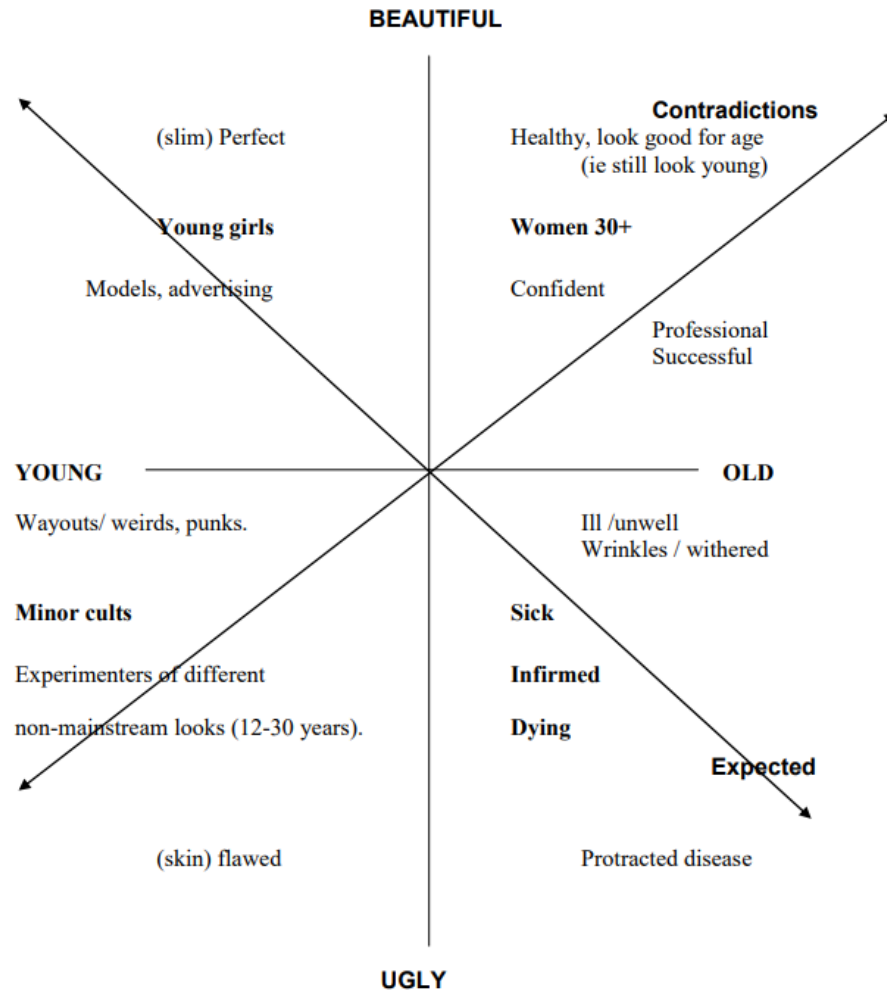
The Europeans and Americans were economically potent, allowing them to exert social forces on people of color to adhere to European or American aesthetics to gain acceptance and jobs (Chen et al., 2019). This says much about history and racism and how some races or ethnic groups have been made to fit the parameter of beauty by subjugating and relegating others to the periphery (Suk, 2019). When placing the beauty standards into the historical context of colonialism, imperialism, and structural racism, it becomes apparent that beauty standards are historically informed and perpetuate power structures and hegemonic ideals (Parker & Chakrani, 2022). Contemplating the historical background of beauty standards alongside their ongoing continuity is crucial to exploring how colonial and racist paradigms still shape beauty standards in the contemporary culturally diverse world (Howell et al., 2017).

These standards often blend traditional values with modern influences, creating a unique beauty narrative. For example, the value placed on clear, glowing skin and well-groomed appearances aligns with global beauty trends yet is also deeply rooted in Arab cultural practices of self-care and hygiene. Similarly, emphasizing familial solid and social connections in the Arab world influences perceptions of beauty, where warmth, hospitality, and kindness are highly

esteemed traits (Haddad, 2023; Kuipers, 2022; Laham, 2020). These sources suggest that while physical beauty is recognized, attributes such as generosity and wisdom have traditionally played a significant role in the concept of beauty in the Arab world. However, this changed over the years due to various factors that cut across Islamic culture, Bedouin customs, and globalization within Kuwait and the larger Arab world. Specifically, Markus and Kitayama (1991) found that in traditional Arab culture, physical attractiveness was not highly valued, but more importance was attached to characteristics such as kindness and intelligence. However, with the emergence of global media and social networks, new forms of beauty have been introduced, thanks to maintaining traditional values and modernization. These new standards are often characterized by features like clear, radiant skin and nicely groomed hair, demonstrating global beauty standards and Arab practices of personal grooming and cleanliness (Melisse et al., 2020).

Figure 2.3 shows a diagram that categorizes individuals' perceptions based on age and physical appearance using two axes. Parameters of this matrix included the vertical axis that distinguishes between 'Beautiful' and 'Ugly.' In contrast, the horizontal axis divides the patients into 'Young' and 'Old' (Ogilvie, 2005).

Figure 2 3: Societies View of Beauty ([from Ogilvie, 2005](#))



In the positive class of beautiful and young are people, especially women who are skinny and regarded as having perfect features; they include the young girls presented as models on billboards. The second quadrant, both beautiful and old, represents older people who are believed to be young and do not have aging signs. Women over 30 are beautiful, confident, booming, and professional (Ogilvie, 2005). Ugly and young are represented in the bottom left quadrant, comprising youths trying out non-mainstream appearances: outcasts, outcasts, punks, and members of minor cults of 12-30 years of age; those with conspicuous skin blemishes. The bottom right quadrant of ugly and old includes older people as seen as sick, crippled, or dying;

poor health and aging are characteristics of this quadrant as it encompasses long sickness and physical breakdown.

Thus, mental markers related to whiteness are called markers of beauty and success. This continued the cycle of the inferior status for those categorized as non-white, in terms of their racial and ethnic backgrounds, who had to assimilate to European forms of beauty in order to gain middle-class acceptance. In this case, whiteness is beautiful, and other races and ethnicities carry the foundations of social, political, and economic power established in history. They argue that it is vital for scholars to explore both the establishment and continuous promotion of beauty standards in light of colonialism, imperialism, racism, and other structural factors.

Influence of the Western Culture

Western beauty standards started to have a more substantial effect, changing trends towards Western dress and cosmetics approaches. This movement exemplifies a more extensive pattern in several areas whereby beauty norms have adapted to social, cultural, and technical advancements (Williams, 2024). Nagar and Virk (2017) address the standardization of beauty norms across non-Western nations, showing the widespread influence of beauty ideals. They examined the effect of acute media images on a sample of young adult Indian women (N=60). They reported that self-esteem changes over time were also influenced by group membership. Overall, their results indicate that the impact of media exposure varied significantly over time between the intervention and control groups for all three measures.

Rhodes (2006) also talks about the similarities in conceptions of beauty and differences in attractiveness across cultures. Grammer et al. (2003), coming deep further on the same concept, state that it may be that there is no universal content for beauty standards, but there are universals for creating beauty standards across cultures. Thus, different countries' beauty ideals

can be associated with cultural and economic roots. The exposure to Western culture, globalization, and urbanization noted by Pike and Dunne (2015) in their review piece “The Rise of Eating Disorders in Asia” contributes to such beauty benchmarks. Jung (2018) also recognizes how contemporary and traditional standards of beauty shape women’s self-perception of beauty, emphasizing the cultural norms that compel women to conform to those standards. Moreover, Nagara and Nurhajati (2022) continued discussing globalization, following beauty standards, and considering that beauty norms are social constructs linked with global trends.

On the other hand, what may be perceived as being beautiful in one culture may be perceived as odd in another, indicating that beauty norms are culturally determined. It is also possible to identify the influence of cultural diversity to determine perceptions of body obesity regarding the notions of beauty. This is widely appreciated as a beauty standard in Euro-American cultures. This approach challenges the argument that beauty norms are set by biology, arguing that they are vulnerable to the cumulative culture and social philosophy.

In Kuwait, these global influences intersect with traditional values to create unique beauty standards. The influence of Western media and beauty ideals in Kuwait, driven by exposure to platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, highlights the need to explore how these global trends interact with local culture (Lodi, 2020). While Western ideals emphasize thinness and specific facial aesthetics, Kuwait’s beauty standards are shaped by a blend of modern global influences and traditional cultural values. This intersection creates a distinct beauty narrative that has not been fully explored in the literature, thus identifying a gap in understanding how Western beauty ideals affect body image and cosmetic surgery intentions in Middle Eastern societies like Kuwait.

Beauty and Body Image in the Arab world and Kuwait

The transformation of beauty ideals in the Arab region, especially Kuwait, has been shaped by a blend of cultural and historical elements and Western beauty influences. Research by Frith et al. (2005), Jung (2018), and Xie & Zhang (2013) investigate beauty ideals within various cultural frameworks, highlighting the significance of cultural factors in forming these standards. Moreover, Swami et al. (2010) delves into the links between beauty standards, sexism, and objectification to show the complex ties between societal views and beauty norms. Đurović et al. (2016) offer perspectives on how cultural and religious beliefs, including Islamic principles, shape beauty perceptions, particularly among Muslim women.

Mitchell (2014) compares thin TV characters to mostly average-sized characters to assess social comparison theory's effects on Kuwaiti college-aged young adults' body image. According to the combined study, TV shows affect body image differently for men and women. Slim-character TV specials reduce men's overweight evaluation, preoccupation, information seeking, pressure, and internalization. Watching more shows with skinny characters lowers self-satisfaction because the appearance evaluation has a pessimistic coefficient estimate: overweight preoccupation, information seeking, pressure from others, and general internalization increase. Thin TV characters make women more overweight-conscious. Watching shows with average-sized characters made women seek information, feel pressure, and internalize. Average body character programmers can also enforce body image internalization. Essentially, similar methods are evident throughout the Arab world as a whole. Tensions between local culture and faith and the effect of the West in shaping beauty ideals also exist in the region. Other Gulf Cooperation Council countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, remain diverse in

their beauty requirements due to cultural, social, and economic factors (Alfalih, 2016; Kheir, 2008).

In Kuwait, the early twentieth century's beauty concern involved wearing less makeup and dressing modestly in Arabic costumes (Penn, 2020). However, with the contemporary advancements and integration into the global economy within the Arab region in the past couple of decades, beauty standards and aspects of their body image have evolved. Concepts of beauty have evolved in Kuwaiti society, characterized by both traditional and neo-liberal outlooks. This is evident by the fact that Western fashion has been accepted while there are protocols observed in traditional wear, such as the abaya and the thobe or the jellabiya. This multiculturalism is evident in beauty standards and body perceptions among Kuwaiti men and women (Gonçalves, 2018; George, 2021; Lodi, 2020).

Moreover, Kuwaiti women consider the measure of beauty through proper dress code and decency, yet elegance is acceptable. While there is still value laid on natural beauty, many women also want to change or modify their looks to suit the Western world, especially with spotless skin, well-shaped arched eyebrows, and well-groomed hair. People's cosmetic needs today differ from the previous year; they use Botox, fillers, and even plastic surgery. They want to look like that, which is prevalent among some Kuwaitis (Al Naimi, 2021; Alsuwailan, 2006; Todosi, 2014). Likewise, Kuwaiti men also experience an alteration in beauty standards that are dominant in society, tightly intertwined with the older ideas of machismo, such as cleanness, styling, and physical looks. Male Kuwaitis are starting to take more interest and pay attention to fitness and grooming, with figures like beard maintenance, hairstyling, and skincare among them. However, exposure to Western media and celebrities has made Kuwaiti men more

in tune with the fashion world and the look they should portray (Alqutub, 2018; Hirsch, 2011; Prianti, 2018).

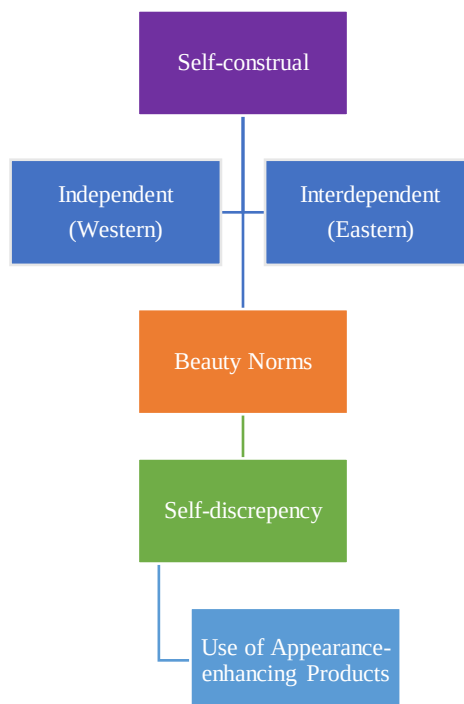
It is important to note that Kuwait's beauty and body image perceptions are not uniform and can vary significantly depending on age, socioeconomic status, and cultural background. While some Kuwaitis may embrace Western beauty standards, others may prioritize traditional values and cultural authenticity. Overall, the evolving landscape of beauty and body image in Kuwait and the Arab world reflects the complexities of identity, globalization, and cultural change in the modern era. As societies navigate these shifts, discussions surrounding beauty ideals and body image remain dynamic and multifaceted.

Impact of Cultural Variations on Body Image and Beauty Standards

The impact of cultural variations on body image and beauty standards is profound, as evidenced by the wide-ranging preferences for male and female body fat across different cultures (Frederick et al., 2007). While some cultures may idealize thinner body types, others may celebrate fuller figures. This diversity highlights the subjective nature of beauty, the expression of individual preferences on beauty, and underscores the influence of cultural norms and values in shaping perceptions of attractiveness. Moreover, Shahani-Denning (2003) introduces the "beautiful is good" bias, rooted in the perception that physical appearance reflects inner qualities and permeates various cultural contexts. Similarly, Sisti et al. (2021) argue, "Every culture has its own definition of beauty." This bias manifests in societal interactions such as job interviews and assessments of ability and morality, where attractive individuals are often favored (Dion et al., 1972). Thus, cultural beliefs about beauty impact individual self-perception and influence social dynamics and opportunities.

Madan (2018) examines how variations in self-construal (independent vs. interdependent) culture affect beauty seeking. In Western societies, people view themselves as autonomous and unique. Eastern civilizations practice interdependence, where people see themselves as part of a collective. Cultural beauty norms define what is desirable in a society. Figure 2.4 shows how self-construal affects beauty norms. Western societies may value uniqueness and success. Eastern may value social harmony and roles. Beauty norms define self-discrepancy as the difference between one's actual and ideal selves. When people feel their looks do not match beauty expectations, they feel self-conscious, according to the figure. Enhancing appearance Products show that self-discrepancy drives cosmetics use. They utilize these things to match their appearance to beauty standards. Due to stricter social standards and higher self-discrepancy, interdependent cultures utilize more appearance-enhancing items (Madan, 2018).

Figure 2 4: Impact of culture on the pursuit of beauty ([from Madan, 2018](#))



Eastern countries (China, Japan, Korea) use more appearance-enhancing items than Western countries (USA, Canada) due to social standards (Gaudio et al., 2014). Eastern cultures have more self-discrepancy due to cultural constraints; hence, they use more beauty products to close the gap. The psychological impact of beauty or physical appearance on self-confidence in confrontation with the external world moderates the effect of cultural norms on beauty product usage, with tighter norms increasing conformity and product use. Poor body image sufferers confront several psychological and physiological issues. Negative body image perceptions are highly linked to disordered eating and eating disorders. These problems demonstrate the enormous impact of beauty standards on mental health and well-being. Next, we will address body image and fulfillment.

Body Image and Body-Satisfaction

Body image is generally defined as how we perceive ourselves, how we think about our body, how much we like or dislike what we have or how we want it to be since it forms a considerable portion of who we are or as referred to as self-identity (Silva et al., 2019) and is a psychological concept which has been described as the techniques used in thinking, estimate, emotions, and behavior connected with the physical appearance (Yamamotova et al., 2017) postulates that, to analyze body image and its intricacies, the aspects that are involved are Cognitive, Perceptual, Affective and Behavioral.

Cognitive aspects involve thoughts and beliefs about one's body, such as internal dialogues regarding appearance (Silva et al., 2019). Perceptual aspects focus on how accurately individuals see and appraise their body size, shape, or weight (Lips, 2016). Affective components relate to emotions tied to body satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Cash & Smolak,

2011). Lastly, behavioral components stem from body image, like avoiding specific clothing or monitoring one's body (Gaudio et al., 2014).

Gender and Race Differences in Body Image Perception

Historically, studies on body satisfaction have predominantly centered around white women, leaving a substantial void in our understanding of body satisfaction among other demographic groups. This omission extends to white males and individuals from ethnic minorities, irrespective of gender. Eisler and Hersen (2012) aptly highlight this dearth of data, underscoring the importance of broadening our research focus to encompass a more diverse range of individuals.

Societal norms and cultural influences play pivotal roles in shaping how individuals perceive their bodies. These factors intersect with gender and racial identities, contributing to unique experiences and challenges regarding body image (Cash & Smolak, 2011). Gender norms often dictate different ideals for male and female bodies, with women typically facing more pressure to conform to thinness ideals, while men may feel pressured to achieve muscularity. Similarly, racial and ethnic backgrounds introduce additional layers of complexity, as beauty standards vary across cultures and communities. Thus, exploring how gender and race intersect with body perception offers valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of body image (Lips, 2016; Lipson et al., 2020). Alternatively, gender and race differences can trigger body dissatisfaction and prompt CPS.

In the context of Kuwait, gender plays a significant role in shaping body image perceptions, with distinct expectations for men and women. Influenced by traditional values and global beauty trends, Kuwaiti women may feel pressure to maintain a specific appearance, leading to body dissatisfaction and consideration of cosmetic and plastic surgery (CPS) (Penn,

2020). Conversely, men are increasingly influenced by Western ideals of fitness and muscularity, impacting their body image and potentially leading them to pursue similar aesthetic enhancements. By examining how gender dynamics in Kuwait intersect with global beauty trends, this study aims to shed light on the specific pressures Kuwaiti men and women face regarding body image and how these pressures may influence their decisions to undergo CPS. Understanding these gender-specific issues in Kuwait is essential to contextualize body image concerns and motivations for cosmetic surgery within the unique cultural and societal landscape.

Body Dissatisfaction Leads to CPS

Body dissatisfaction refers to comparing oneself to others in society and feeling dissatisfied with one's physical appearance, a phenomenon influenced by various cultural and ethnic factors (Markova & Azocar, 2021). Individuals often internalize societal beauty standards, leading to inadequacy or dissatisfaction when their appearance does not align with these ideals. This dissatisfaction can stem from societal pressures to conform to certain body types or personal insecurities about physical attributes. Research suggests that body dissatisfaction is a prevalent issue, particularly among women, and can have negative consequences for mental health and well-being (Lizińczyk et al., 2020; Verplanken & Tangelder, 2011). Identifying the factors associated with body dissatisfaction is crucial due to its negative impact on well-being and its significance in the current study. Body dissatisfaction is strongly associated with lower self-esteem among adolescents (Shoraka et al., 2019). This correlation underscores the significance of body image in shaping overall self-esteem, with negative perceptions of one's body contributing to declines in self-esteem over time (Cash & Deagle, 1997). Those factors extend from family to self-esteem, as discussed below.

Family: Family plays a significant and ongoing role in shaping the development of young individuals as they seek parental admiration and acceptance throughout their formative years (Griffiths et al., 2016). Parental attitudes and behaviors can profoundly influence the likelihood of their children developing body image and eating concerns, either positively or negatively (Cash & Smolak, 2011). For instance, parents prioritizing weight management activities may inadvertently contribute to their children's body dissatisfaction (Shoraka et al., 2019). This influence can manifest through direct actions such as making weight or appearance remarks, teasing children, pressuring them to lose weight, or supporting restrictive diets (Damiano et al., 2015). Additionally, indirect parenting methods, such as making harsh body-image comments or endorsing extreme exercise or dieting behaviors, can also impact children's body-image perceptions and self-esteem (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002). In the long term, these parental behaviors may contribute to internalizing societal beauty standards and developing negative body image among children (Grabe et al., 2008). Such actions perpetuate self-criticism and teach children to judge themselves and others based on appearance, potentially leading to long-lasting psychological consequences (Cash & Deagle, 1997).

Peers and social pressure: Peers and social pressure play pivotal roles in shaping body image perceptions among today's youth, who are inundated with mainstream media and social media influences (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014). Research has consistently linked the portrayal of muscular male body ideals and slender female beauty ideals in the media to body image misperception, body dissatisfaction, and the development of eating disorders (Griffiths et al., 2016). This relationship is primarily attributed to social-cognitive processes such as social comparison, wherein individuals compare themselves to idealized images and peers (Arafa & Senosy, 2017). Social pressure to conform to certain body ideals can be particularly influential in

the peer environment as adolescents seek peer acceptance and validation (Levine & Murnen, 2009). Peer teasing or bullying related to weight or appearance can have detrimental effects on body image and psychological well-being, leading to an increased risk of disordered eating behaviors and negative body image (Griffiths et al., 2016).

Self-esteem: Self-esteem shapes individuals' body image perceptions and overall well-being. Research suggests that self-esteem and self-concept are closely intertwined with body image, with higher self-esteem as a protective factor against the adverse effects of Body Mass Index (BMI) and body image dissatisfaction (Ahadzadeh et al., 2018). Individuals with higher self-esteem may be better equipped to withstand societal pressures and unfavorable judgments related to body size and appearance, thus reducing the impact of BMI on body image perception (Griffiths et al., 2016). Moreover, self-esteem is a buffer against the detrimental effects of others' negative opinions and criticisms regarding one's body (Perloff, 2014). Higher self-esteem may mitigate the anxiety induced by external judgments and help individuals maintain a positive self-image despite societal beauty standards (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002). Furthermore, body dissatisfaction is a multifaceted issue influenced by societal norms, aesthetic appeals, personal traits, and communication patterns. Understanding these factors can help shed light on the complexities of body image concerns and inform efforts to promote body positivity and self-acceptance (Woekel, 2005).

Aesthetic Appeals: Aesthetic appeal mirrors individuals' discontent about their bodies (Xu, 2019). On social media platforms, aesthetic ideals are often glorified and perpetuated, increasing pressure to attain these standards. However, this emphasis on aesthetics can also give rise to symbolic aggression, manifested through derogatory comments, online forums, and

private messages. Individuals may experience heightened body dissatisfaction when faced with such aggression, further exacerbating negative feelings about their appearance (Baer, 2018).

Personal traits and body dissatisfaction: Personal traits play a crucial role in shaping individuals' experiences of body dissatisfaction (Markowitz & Tsfati, 2019). Creative thinking and practical communication skills are often perceived as favorable attributes regarding physical appearance. However, societal emphasis on external beauty standards can overshadow other personal qualities, leading individuals to prioritize aesthetics over intrinsic characteristics. This can contribute to feelings of inadequacy or dissatisfaction, as individuals may perceive themselves as falling short of societal expectations (Alpaslan, 2021).

Communication and physical attraction: The concept of an ideal look often emphasizes feminine attractiveness and exerts its influence through various media outlets (Sari et al., 2022). Women's behavior, particularly regarding appearance, is a significant indicator of self-objectification—a phenomenon influenced by societal norms and media representations. Social media platforms like Instagram may exacerbate this tendency, as individuals curate their online personas to align with societal beauty standards. Online and offline Communication about physical appearance can contribute to body dissatisfaction, as individuals may feel pressure to conform to unrealistic ideals (Caso et al., 2020). According to the study conducted by ALshammari (2022)Kuwaitis mostly use Instagram to track famous individuals' activities, followed by Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat, and TikTok. Instagram's appeal stems from its capacity to facilitate social growth and personal development within its network.

Furthermore, the impact of body dissatisfaction on self-esteem may vary across demographic groups, with specific racial, ethnic, or gender groups experiencing heightened vulnerability. Sociocultural factors, such as cultural beauty standards and gender norms, may

exacerbate body image concerns and influence self-esteem differently among diverse populations. Self-esteem plays a multifaceted role in the relationship between body image and overall psychological well-being, highlighting the importance of fostering positive self-perceptions and resilience against societal pressures. Social media platforms like Instagram promote beauty standards and increase body dissatisfaction in Kuwait. Kuwaitis, particularly women, may experience pressure to conform to Western-influenced ideals of thinness, flawless skin, and other aesthetic markers, which celebrities encourage and are firmly rooted in online social interactions. Social media, family expectations, peer pressure, and societal norms shape body image and self-esteem (Penn, 2020). Thus, many Kuwaitis, especially adolescents, may use CPS to conform to these beliefs. Kuwait's unique mix of traditional cultural norms and modern global influences shows how body dissatisfaction appears, often leading people to seek CPS to boost self-esteem and match social expectations. Addressing Kuwait's rising CPS tendency and promoting positive body image requires understanding these culturally specific issues.

Social Media Influence on Body Image and CSP

Social Media and Beauty Standards

The emergence of new interactive platforms on social media demonstrates the interconnectedness between self-presentations, peer influences, and beauty standards. Numerous women could emulate their desired media figure because of this ideal's social, psychological, and practical benefits and the conviction that their lives will improve. (Engeln-Maddox, 2006).

Moreover, the prevalence of social media platforms exacerbates these pressures, as young people are constantly exposed to curated images and lifestyles that promote unrealistic beauty standards (Fardouly et al., 2015). The pursuit of likes, comments, and followers on social media

often reinforces the importance of physical appearance, further contributing to body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem among adolescents (Perloff, 2014). Social media can bypass or even disturb cultural conventions and strengthen them. This contradiction prompts urgent inquiries about the current relations between customs and technology in Arab nations like Kuwait (Shen & Khalifa, 2020). Research conducted in Kuwait indicates a significant reliance on Instagram for tracking famous individuals' activities, highlighting the platform's role in shaping social norms and personal development within the Kuwaiti community (ALshammari, 2022).

Social media platforms have become ubiquitous in contemporary society, profoundly influencing individuals' perceptions of beauty and body image. With the rise of platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, users are constantly exposed to curated images and content that often idealize certain body types and beauty standards (Kaewpradub et al., 2017). Users engage in image sharing and consumption, with physical attractiveness playing a central role in these interactions.

Social media's impact may be more substantial than conventional media due to its constant availability on smartphones. Kaewpradub et al. (2017) added that social media users share their images and look at others' photos, with physical attractiveness playing a significant role in these interactions. Users are exposed to meticulously curated social media content showcasing idealized body types, such as thin bodies (thinspiration) or lean and muscular bodies (fitspiration) and getting messages and comments on their bodies. Users often compare themselves to beauty ideals on social media and adopt these standards as their body image. When one's physical appearance does not align with their internalized ideals, it may lead to body

dissatisfaction. This notion is especially crucial for teens who dedicate more time and get criticism about their looks on social media (de Vries et al., 2019).

Furthermore, social media users, particularly women, often seek validation and feedback on their appearances through interactions on these platforms (Grower et al., 2019). The constant exposure to idealized images and the pressure to conform to societal beauty standards perpetuated on social media exacerbate body dissatisfaction (Cohen et al., 2019). The reinforcement of an ideal look, often emphasizing feminine attractiveness, through various media outlets contributes to self-objectification and heightened body image concerns, particularly among women (Sari et al., 2022).

Understanding beauty standards for women involves considering how individuals perceive beauty within their cultural context. Different cultures have unique perspectives and attitudes toward what is considered attractive, leading to variations in beauty ideals and expectations. On social media, women often seek validation by seeking feedback on their appearance from others, especially when they see popular posts being widely shared. This constant quest for approval can influence their perceptions and concerns about achieving the "ideal" look. Personal traits play a crucial part in considering body dissatisfaction.

Influence of Social Media Advertising and Images

The advent of social media has revolutionized the way people perceive and engage with their body image. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok have become powerful mediums for promoting thin body ideals and perpetuating messages against obesity (Cecon et al., 2017). Social media's influence on beauty and body image, particularly among the young, is a hot topic in research. Studies like those from Aparicio-Martínez et al. (2019), Fardouly et al. (2015), and Vuong et al. (2021) have delved into how social media use links to body image

worries, showing how platforms such as Instagram may lead to self-objectification and dissatisfaction with one's body.

ALshammari (2022) conducted an exploratory study on social media celebrities and the role of public relations companies in improving the mental image of the masses in Kuwait. Table 5 shows the descriptive summary of the responses to the questionnaire's items used to measure the degree of improvement in the mental image. It is clear from Table 5 above that the arithmetic means that the degree of improvement in the mental image of the masses toward social media celebrities was high, ranging from (3.98 to 4.08). These results can be explained by referring to the study (Fitch, 2017; Ghryani & Omar, 2021), which showed that the mental image of the masses and customers is closely related to public relations, where public relations practices are based on building, improving, and maintaining the mental image. Improving the masses' mental image is the starting point for all programs and plans PR firms implement.

Studies, including (Fitch, 2017; Zamani et al., 2015), have shown that public relations companies contribute to achieving a state of trust, respect, and mutual understanding between celebrities and their audiences and ensuring that this state is maintained for as long as possible. Moreover, PR firms work to justify situations, remove misunderstandings, explain and analyze problems, anticipate and seize opportunities for celebrities, increasing public confidence in celebrities and their satisfaction with their content. Further research by Anderson et al. (2022) and Craddock et al. (2019) examines how social media evolves beauty standards, noting the complex role these platforms play in shaping what society views as beautiful and how individuals perceive their bodies. Gorska et al. (2023) also highlights social media's part in heightening body dissatisfaction and potentially triggering eating disorders.

Factors Influencing Perceptions of Body Image and Body Image Disorders

Several factors affecting body image have been researched, including Body Mass Index (BMI), family, peers, society, media, culture, self-esteem, psychopathology, gender, age, marital status, education level, smoking status, alcohol consumption, physical activity, weight control behavior, religiosity, and spirituality (Lewer et al., 2017). Body Mass Index (BMI) is commonly used to measure body fat, considering height and weight (Lewer et al., 2017). Higher BMI has been associated with negative body image, possibly due to societal pressures regarding body size (Griffiths et al., 2016). Family dynamics greatly influence body image, with parental comments about weight potentially shaping self-perception (Cash & Smolak, 2011). Peers also play a significant role, as social pressure to conform to certain body ideals can lead to body image concerns (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014). Societal standards of beauty, often depicted in media, can contribute to feelings of inadequacy (Grabe et al., 2008). Cultural values and norms regarding body size vary across societies, impacting body image (Swami et al., 2010). Indeed, several factors, including self-esteem, influence body image perceptions, and low self-esteem is often associated with negative body image (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002).

In a study by Chae (2022), boys and girls with school achievement had higher body image distortion than students without school achievement, and boys and girls who did not try weight control had higher body image distortion than those who tried weight control. In addition to common factors, boys had higher body image distortion in middle school students, coed school students, and students who did not exercise in school gym class. At the same time, girls had higher body image distortion in students with low school achievement and with low economic status. Physical activity can promote positive body image (Sabiston et al., 2019). Behaviors related to weight control, such as dieting, can contribute to body image concerns

(Stice et al., 2013). Religious and spiritual beliefs may influence body image (Spiller et al., 2020). These factors collectively shape individuals' body image experiences, underscoring the need for a comprehensive understanding of body image concerns. CPS is a practice, or an intervention people adopt as a remedy once they are dissatisfied.

Mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety can distort body image (Cash & Deagle, 1997). Gender identity shapes body image experiences and is influenced by societal expectations (Griffiths et al., 2016). Body image concerns can vary across life stages (Tiggemann, 2004). Moreover, relationship status can impact body image, particularly in committed relationships (Kroon et al., 2019). Education level influences body image through factors such as access to health information (Grabe et al., 2008).

Additionally, smoking and alcohol consumption behavior may be linked to body image concerns (Foster & Rodriguez, 2018). Also, alcohol consumption affects body image through its impact on self-perception (Levitan et al., 2006). The traditional role of media, which was highly focused on information broadcasting, has evolved over the years. Grabe et al. (2008) confirm that mass media influences women by depicting the thin-ideal body, which causes image disturbance in women.

Media representation of cosmetic and plastic surgery also plays a significant role in shaping perceptions, particularly among specific populations like medical students. Research indicates that exposure to media portrayals of cosmetic procedures can lead to misconceptions about the field's scope and nature as a medical specialty (Mortada, 2019). This highlights the importance of accurate and balanced media representation to provide a realistic understanding of plastic surgery and its implications.

There is a connection between feeling unhappy with one's body and experiencing adverse effects on mental health, as seen by the misconception of body image and dissatisfaction with body weight. The concept of an ideal look often emphasizes feminine attractiveness and exerts its influence via various media outlets. Social media tends to depict slender women as more aesthetically pleasing and accomplished in comparison to overweight women.

Risks of CPS

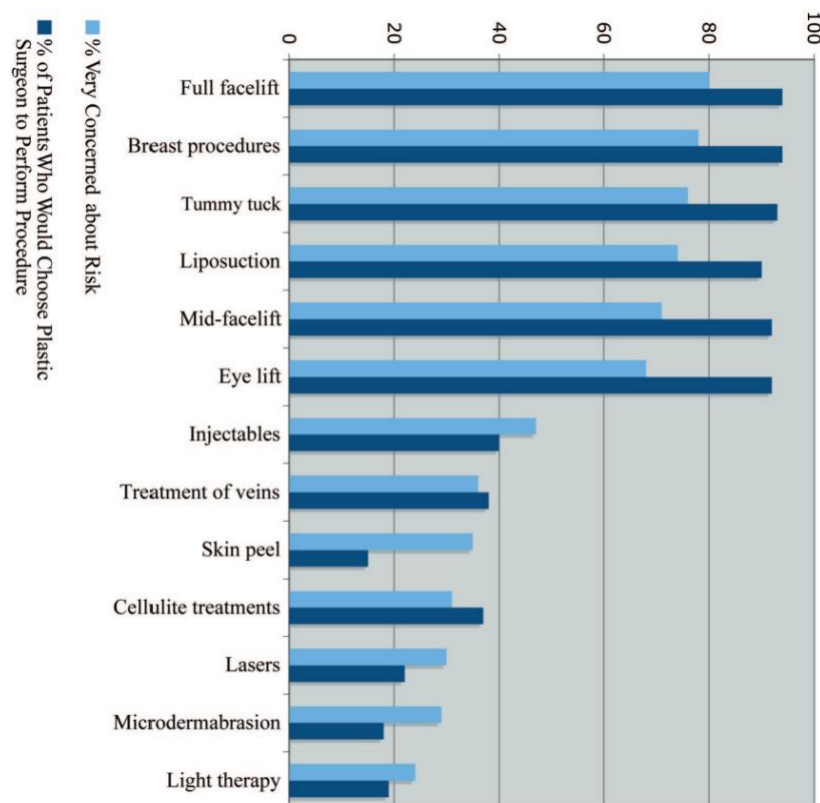
Cosmetic and plastic surgery brought significant shifts in societal attitudes and acceptability caused by cultural shifts, media portrayals, and advancements in technology. Once viewed primarily as a means of satisfying vanity, plastic surgery is now increasingly recognized as a valid method for enhancing self-esteem and physical appearance (Denadai et al.,2015). This transformation in perception can be attributed in part to the increased visibility of cosmetic procedures in the media and the willingness of celebrities to openly discuss their own experiences with surgery (De Blacam et al., 2015).

The normalization of cosmetic and plastic surgery has been further propelled by social media platforms, where individuals can share their surgical journeys and outcomes, thereby reducing the stigma associated with such treatments (Fraser et al., 2017). However, despite this growing acceptance, public opinion on plastic surgery remains complex and varies significantly depending on factors such as gender, age, and cultural background (Bonell et al., 2021). For instance, women undergoing cosmetic surgery may still face criticism and negative perceptions, highlighting the inconsistency in public approval.

As cosmetic and plastic surgery becomes increasingly accepted and normalized, prospective patients are becoming more aware of the associated risks. Plastic surgery, like any surgical procedure, carries inherent risks ranging from minor inconveniences such as scarring

and dissatisfaction to more severe complications such as infections, adverse reactions to anesthesia, and, in rare cases, death (Dunkin et al., 2003). Therefore, informed consent is crucial for individuals considering plastic surgery to ensure they understand the potential risks and benefits before undergoing any procedure. A study by D'Amico (2008) showed that consumers' choice of a cosmetic procedure provider was directly correlated to their perception of the risk associated with the procedure. More than 90 percent of consumers said they would choose a plastic surgeon to perform invasive procedures, which the respondents associated with the highest risk. Less than 40 percent said they would choose a plastic surgeon for less invasive procedures associated with lower risk. For the least invasive procedures, the percentage was as low as 15 percent (Figure 2.5).

Figure 2 5: Preference versus perceived risks of CPS in women within the USA ([from D'Amico, 2008](#))



In the context of discussions about body image, plastic surgery represents a complex intersection of societal norms, personal perceptions, and cultural influences (Denadai et al., 2015). The portrayal of idealized bodies in the media and on social media platforms can contribute to unrealistic beauty standards, prompting individuals to seek cosmetic interventions to achieve these ideals (Fraser et al., 2017). However, it is essential to acknowledge that plastic surgery is not a panacea for body image concerns and that societal pressures to conform to specific standards should be critically examined and challenged (Bonell et al., 2021). Moreover, individuals considering plastic surgery should be empowered to make informed decisions about their bodies, considering their values, preferences, and potential risks (Dunkin et al., 2003).

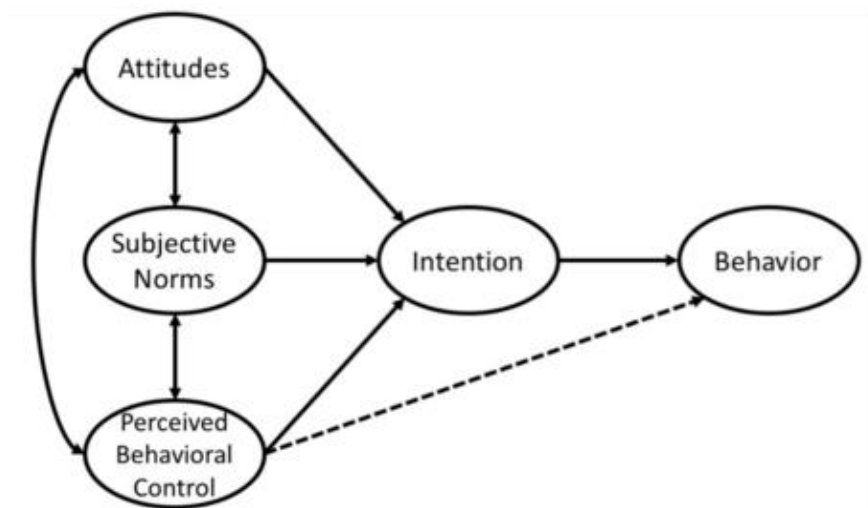
The American Society of Plastic Surgeons stresses the significance of patients understanding the risks and advantages of any operation. Risk awareness is a medical and ethical need to help patients make informed choices (American Society of Plastic Surgeons, 2022). Surgeons must communicate risks and establish reasonable goals in an age when social media and celebrity endorsements might raise expectations for cosmetic surgery (Mortada et al., 2019). Mortada also states that this obligation is crucial. Comprehensive patient education and reasonable expectation setting are essential to patient-surgeon interaction and plastic surgery patient happiness and safety.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was developed by Icek Ajzen in 1984, building upon the Theory of Reasoned Action. TPB includes four main parts: target behavior, intention, attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. It suggests that intention is the main factor influencing behavior, affected by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control (Ajzen, 1991). TPB evolved from the Theory of Reasoned Action created by

Fishbein and Ajzen in 1975. While the Theory of Reasoned Action focused on attitudes and subjective norms, TPB added perceived behavioral control as a crucial element, emphasizing individuals' belief in their ability to perform the behavior (Trafimow, 2009). This framework provides a structured way to analyze the complex factors influencing health-related decisions influenced by technology and society, laying a solid foundation for research and analysis (Ajzen, 1991).

Figure 2 6: Visual Representation of the Theory of Planned Behavior ([from Ajzen, 1991](#))



“The TPB starts with an explicit definition of the behavior of interest in terms of its target, the action involved, the context in which it occurs, and the time frame” (Ajzen, 2020, p.314). This statement shows the importance of context and time frame in utilizing TPB.

Attitudes are an individual's evaluations and emotional responses toward a particular behavior. Positive or negative attitudes significantly influence the likelihood of performing that behavior, as discussed by Ajzen (2001) and Cacioppo & Berntson (1994). In the context of CPS trends influenced by social media in Kuwait, attitudes represent individuals' evaluations, either positive or negative, towards altering their appearance surgically. Research by Slevect & Tiggemann (2010) has explored attitudes toward cosmetic surgery in middle-aged women,

highlighting the role of body image, aging anxiety, and media influence in shaping these attitudes. Understanding individuals' attitudes towards cosmetic surgery is crucial in comprehending their motivations and decisions regarding surgical enhancements.

Subjective norms involve the perceived social pressures or expectations from essential individuals, such as friends and family, concerning the behavior. The perception that these significant others approve of the behavior can increase the individual's propensity to engage in it, as indicated by Cialdini et al. (1990) and Quinn et al. (2017). However, it refers to the perceived social pressures or expectations from significant others regarding engagement in a specific behavior, such as pursuing beauty standards through cosmetic surgery. Markey & Markey (2009) have investigated the correlates of young women's interest in obtaining cosmetic surgery, emphasizing the influence of societal norms and media messages on individuals' perceptions of cosmetic procedures. Exploring subjective norms can provide insights into the societal influences driving individuals towards considering CPS.

Perceived Behavioral Control refers to the individual's beliefs about their competence and control over performing a behavior. Alvarez-Risco et al. (2021) and Barmpagianni et al. (2013) suggested that a higher sense of control enhances the likelihood of behavior performance. Perceived behavioral control reflects individuals' beliefs in their ability to perform a behavior, considering financial resources, accessibility to surgical procedures, and confidence in outcomes. Tang et al. (2022) have studied the association between total screen time, body dissatisfaction, and cosmetic surgery intentions among young adults, highlighting the role of perceived control in shaping intentions toward cosmetic procedures. Examining perceived behavioral control can shed light on the practical considerations influencing individuals' decisions regarding CPS.

Intentions signify an individual's readiness and commitment to enact a specific behavior. Strong intentions are a robust predictor of behavior execution, as posited by Alvarez-Risco et al. (2021) and Kim et al. (2022). Intention, within the framework of cosmetic surgery trends influenced by social media in Kuwait, represents individuals' readiness and willingness to undergo surgical enhancements to alter their appearance. Dehdari et al. (2015) have explored the prediction of intention to perform cosmetic surgery among female college students based on the Theory of Reasoned Action, emphasizing the significance of intention as a predictor of behavior in the context of cosmetic procedures. Investigating intention can provide valuable insights into individuals' motivations and likelihood of engaging in cosmetic surgery practices.

Behavior is the actual conduct exhibited by individuals. When there is a strong alignment between intentions, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms, the individual is more likely to actualize the intended behavior, as supported by the findings of Singh & Kaur (2021). The context of cosmetic surgery trends in Kuwait encompasses individuals' actions to alter their appearance surgically. Martinez et al. (2023) have systematically reviewed motivations for seeking cosmetic enhancement procedures of the face, highlighting the behavioral aspects associated with individuals' decisions to undergo cosmetic surgery. Understanding the behavioral patterns related to cosmetic surgery is essential for comprehending the real-world implications of social media influence on individuals' choices regarding surgical enhancements.

The Theory of Planned Behavior provides a solid theoretical foundation that fits well with the goals of this study, which seeks to examine the relationship between social media usage and trends in CPS in Kuwait. TPB is ideal for this research project because it focuses on comprehending and forecasting human behavior in health-related situations (Ajzen, 1985). TPB offers a thorough method to investigate the intricate relationship between social media impact

and individuals' thoughts and actions on CPS dynamics (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The theory of planned behavior suggests that people's actions are guided by their intentions, which are shaped by their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control over their behavior (Ajzen, 1985).

Social media platforms like Instagram and Snapchat strongly impact how people view their attractiveness by promoting idealized beauty standards. Past studies have shown that the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) effectively explains different health behaviors impacted by social and environmental factors (Ohannessian & Vannucci, 2020). Research has demonstrated the importance of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in predicting behavior change, establishing TPB as an appropriate framework for this research. To gain insight into the rise of cosmetic and plastic surgeries in Kuwait, precisely due to the impact of social media, this research seeks to explore the factors involved by utilizing the Theory of Planned Behavior. (Chen et al., 2019, Glanz & Bishop, 2010).

Thus, utilizing TPB in this research allowed us to understand how social media exposure influences people's opinions on cosmetic surgery, the social norms related to these procedures, and their sense of control over participating in them. On one hand, this study explored to understand how the portrayal of beauty standards on social media platforms influences individuals' self-image in Kuwait. Moreover, on the other hand, to understand the role social media-induced perceptions of body image play in motivating individuals in Kuwait to consider cosmetic and plastic surgery. The connection between TPB and the research goals guarantees that the study is well-equipped to thoroughly explore the link between social media usage and cosmetic surgery trends in Kuwait, ultimately enhancing our knowledge of this phenomenon.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Hypotheses

H1: Frequency of social media use will positively correlate with the motivation (attitudes, beliefs, intentions, subjective norms) for cosmetic and plastic surgery in Kuwait.

H2: Exposure to Western beauty standards on social media positively correlates with the perceptions of body image (positive or negative) among social media users in Kuwait.

H3: Kuwaiti social media users' exposure to Western beauty standards influences their attitudes towards cosmetic and plastic surgery (CPS) and affects their intention to undergo CPS.

H4: Perceived subjective norms (media use, family, friends, aesthetic appeal) influence the Kuwait social media users' motivation to engage in CPS.

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a difference in perceptions of body image among those who have performed it and those who have not?

RQ2: Which subjective norms will influence the likelihood of Kuwait social media users' intentions to undergo CPS?

RQ3: What are the factors that influence the intention to undergo?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This study investigated the relationship between social media exposure to Western beauty standards and attitudes towards cosmetic and plastic surgery (CPS) among Kuwaiti individuals. This chapter outlines the methods employed in conducting the study, including the research design, participants (research population), data collection procedures, and data analysis techniques.

Method

This study has been conducted using quantitative inquiry. Quantitative research is a good fit for this study because it is specific to online studies; it allows for gathering numerical data from a broad audience, which helps analyze patterns and draw conclusions supported by strong statistical evidence (Garrison et al., 2001). This approach was beneficial for assessing the frequency and spread of particular attitudes or actions among internet users (Aslan, 2021). A study conducted by Dillman et al. (2009) is one example that proves the effectiveness of quantitative research in online studies. The benefits of utilizing quantitative methods in online surveys are highlighted by the authors in the book "Internet, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method." They emphasize the simplicity of conducting online surveys, the capacity to reach a wide range of people, and the effectiveness of gathering numerical data for statistical purposes.

This study was also an online survey because the population sample comprises online media users in Kuwait. This way, it becomes easy to connect with them as research participants within the online context. The online survey has been distributed to the research population via

social media, particularly WhatsApp, after approval from the Institutional Review Board. (IRB). This study used WhatsApp because it is commonly used in Kuwait in various daily activities. Research has indicated that WhatsApp is a favored social media platform in Kuwait, proven by its high usage among teachers and social media enthusiasts (Al-Awidi & Al-Furaih, 2023; Al-Enezi et al., 2017). WhatsApp's popularity in Kuwait can be credited to its effectiveness in communication, sharing information, and educational activities, cementing its place in the digital scene in the area.

This study utilized a cross-sectional research design to investigate the relationships between the key constructs of the TPB model and Kuwait individuals' intentions to adopt CPS. The TPB was the theoretical framework guiding the research, emphasizing the role of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in shaping behavioral intentions toward CPS.

Participants

The participants in this study were recruited randomly from the Kuwaiti population, and they had to be citizens, specifically social media users aged 18 and above. A convenience sampling method was employed to select participants based on their accessibility and willingness. A specific question was asked under the demographics, notably age, to ensure that participants were 18 and above. The participant selection process was adopted, leaning on the scholarly work of Dastidar (2021) and Islam & Darzi (2022). The sample size was comprised of 300 participants, who were both male and female.

Measurements

For this study, an online survey with a predefined questionnaire following relevant scales aligning with TPB and the research hypothesis was developed using Qualtrics. The survey was

designed to take no more than 20 minutes to complete. The questionnaire was drafted in English and later translated into Arabic to facilitate the research participants' understanding.

Research Design

To align with the aims of this study on social media's influence on self-image and motivation for cosmetic and plastic surgery in Kuwait, survey questions were adapted from prior research. These questions were organized based on the constructs of the Theory of Planned Behavior (behavior, intention, attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control). Also included were queries about Western beauty standards, attitudes towards CPS, intention to undergo CPS, and demographics. The demographic section covered marital status, age, education level, income, gender, and nationality to fully understand participants' diverse backgrounds.

SPSS was used for the data analysis because of its user-friendly environment. It facilitates data analysis without requiring extensive programming experience, making it a valuable tool for exploring the impact of social media on individuals' perceptions and motivations related to cosmetic and plastic surgery in Kuwait (Doorn et al., 2020).

Data Collection Procedures

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire administered online via Qualtrics. Survey questions were gathered from previous studies, particularly the works of Almajnoni et al. (2023), Blais and Weber (2006), Henderson-King (2005), Wolf (2021), and Yang (2015) modified to fit the objectives of the current study. Questions were grouped according to the constructs of the Theory of Planned Behavior (behavior, intention, attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control) that align with the hypotheses.

The survey items were adapted from validated scales previously used in research, like the Acceptance of Cosmetic Scale (ACSS; Henderson-King, 2005), the risk-taking scale (Blais & Weber, 2006), subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Wolf, 2021). Data has been collected through an online survey distributed via social media platforms such as WhatsApp to randomly selected people. Similar approaches to collect quantitative data through an online survey distributed via social media platforms and combined with snowballing in a relevant context were used by scholars Dastidar (2021), Evans & Mathur (2005), Islam & Darzi (2022) and Regmi et al. (2017). These scholars have combined online surveys with snowballing or random selection to efficiently collect quantitative data in various contexts. Their approaches align with the task's requirement to use a similar method in Kuwait's context. The survey included standardized measures to assess participants' exposure to Western beauty standards, attitudes towards CPS, and demographic information. Participants were asked to complete the survey voluntarily, and confidentiality and anonymity were ensured.

Key Variables and Constructs

Social Media Influence

The influence of social media on body image and cosmetic and plastic surgery (CPS) intentions is significant in contemporary society. The scale was measured with 12 items adapted from Cozma & Muturi (2021). The items were measured on a scale of 1 (never) to 5 (all the time). Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok have become powerful mediums for promoting beauty ideals and perpetuating messages that influence body image perceptions ($M = 2.88$, $SD = .68$, $\alpha = .70$). The constant exposure to curated images and content on these platforms can lead to heightened body dissatisfaction and a greater desire for cosmetic enhancements among users. Research indicates that social media users often seek validation

through likes, comments, and followers, which reinforces the importance of physical appearance and can contribute to low self-esteem and body dissatisfaction. In Kuwait, the prevalence of social media use, particularly Instagram, is notable, with many individuals using the platform to follow celebrities and beauty influencers, further shaping their beauty standards and perceptions of body image. Understanding the impact of social media on body image and CPS intentions is crucial for comprehending the cultural and psychological dynamics that drive these behaviors in Kuwait.

Exposure to Western beauty standards

Body image in the Kuwaiti context is mainly influenced by the Western beauty standards portrayed on social media platforms. Those social media feeds seemingly affect the perception of Kuwaiti individuals' body image and inform their intention to go for CPS.

The scale was measured using 15 items adapted from Yang (2015). The items were measured on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Examples of the scales include 1) "I frequently encounter cosmetic and plastic surgery content on social media," 2) I feel more inclined to consider cosmetic and plastic surgery after viewing such content on social media, and 3) Social media content about cosmetic and plastic surgery enhances my knowledge about these procedures ($M = 3.93$, $SD = .78$, $\alpha = .88$).

Positive perceptions of body image: Perception in this study has been measured by 5 items using a 5-point Likert on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), adapted from Yang (2015), and the prompts were 1) "Exposure to Western beauty standards on social media positively influences my body image," 2) "I frequently view the images of beauty on social media as positive comparisons for my body image." 3) "The positive feedback on cosmetic surgery posts on social media impacts my self-esteem." The perception of Kuwaiti social media

users' body image is influenced by their exposure to Western beauty standards ($M = 2.59$, $SD = .93$, $\alpha = .88$).

Negative Perception of Body Image: Negative perception in this study has been assessed by 5 items using a 5-point Likert on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), adapted from Yang (2015), and the prompts were 1) “Seeing Western beauty standards on social media leads to a negative perception of my body image.”, 2) “I believe my self-esteem is negatively affected by the beauty standards depicted on social media.”, 3) “I often feel dissatisfied with my body after viewing Western beauty standards on social media.” ($M = 3.84$, $SD = .86$, $\alpha = .91$).

Attitudes toward CPS: Attitudes in this study refer to using the Acceptance of Cosmetic Scale (ACSS) from Henderson-King (2005). The participants' attitudes were measured with 5 items on a 5-point scale with 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The prompts were 1) “I believe that having cosmetic surgery would help me feel better about myself,” 2) “I think cosmetic surgery is a good way to improve my self-esteem.”, 3) “If I could afford it, I would consider having cosmetic and plastic surgery to make myself feel happier.” ($M = 3.35$, $SD = .84$, $\alpha = .88$).

Intentions to undergo CPS: This study uses the Acceptance of Cosmetic Scale (ACSS) from Henderson-King (2005). The participants' attitudes were measured using 5 items on a 5-point scale with 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The prompts were 1) “I am currently considering cosmetic surgery to improve my self-image.”, 2) “I see cosmetic surgery as a personal choice that I am likely to make for my satisfaction.” 3) “If a relative underwent cosmetic surgery and were pleased with the results, it would make me more open to considering it” ($M = 3.52$, $SD = .83$, $\alpha = .88$).

Perceived subjective norms

Perceived subjective norms in this study were measured using 5 items adapted from Wolf (2021). The participants' subjective norms have been assessed through a 5-point scale with 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The prompts were 1) "I feel that people important to me support the decision to engage in cosmetic and plastic surgery (CPS)," 2) "My friends' views on cosmetic and plastic surgery influence my motivation to consider it," 3) "The opinions of celebrities or influencers on social media about CPS have an impact on my motivation to engage in such procedures." These adapted questionnaires or prompts were distributed to participants to surface what informed their decisions. This leans on how the following elements (media use, family, friends, self-esteem, aesthetic appeal) influence the Kuwait social media users' motivation and how they can contribute to their decision-making process ($M = 3.46$, $SD = .76$, $\alpha = .75$),

Concerns and Risks involved in CPS

Concerns and risks in this study refer to 3 items adapted from Blais and Weber (2006). The participants' attitudes were measured using a 5-point scale of 1 (extremely unlikely) to 5 (extremely likely). The prompts were 1) Seeing images of cosmetic procedures on social media makes me aware of the potential risks involved., 2) I believe that frequent exposure to cosmetic surgery posts on social media could lead someone to underestimate the risks., 3) After viewing cosmetic procedure posts on social media, I feel concerned about the possible complications ($M = 3.28$, $SD = .70$, $\alpha = .84$).

Use of CPS among Respondents

The study includes three final questions (yes or no) designed to assess the respondents' prevalence and intentions regarding cosmetic and plastic surgery (CPS). These questions are

critical in understanding the respondents' experiences with CPS and their motivations and future intentions. The first question aims to determine whether the respondents have previously undergone cosmetic or plastic surgery. The responses to this question provided a baseline measure of CPS prevalence among the study population. For respondents who have undergone CPS, the follow-up question seeks to clarify whether their primary motivation was medical. This distinction is essential for differentiating between surgeries performed for aesthetic enhancement and those done to address medical issues, such as congenital deformities, injuries, or functional impairments. For respondents who have not yet undergone CPS, the next question assessed their future intentions regarding CPS. Understanding these intentions provided insights into potential trends in CPS demand and the factors that influence individuals' decisions to consider these procedures. The responses to these questions were analyzed to identify patterns and correlations between the prevalence of CPS, the reasons for undergoing these procedures, and the intentions of those who have not yet experienced CPS. This analysis helped paint a comprehensive picture of CPS usage among the respondents, including actual experiences and future aspirations.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data obtained from the survey were analyzed using statistical software such as SPSS. SPSS is an open-source statistical software that offers a user-friendly environment, allowing researchers to perform various statistical analyses without extensive programming experience. It supports various analyses, including descriptive statistics, correlation, regression, ANOVA, and Chi-square tests, making it a versatile tool for hypothesis testing and data exploration (Doorn et al., 2020).

Additionally, in the survey, participants were asked to provide some demographic information (gender, age, marital status, level of education, income, nationality, occupational

status). The analysis began with descriptive statistics to summarize the sample's demographic characteristics and the distribution of responses to survey items. These included means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages. Following this, inferential statistics were employed to test the hypotheses. This involved (Doorn et al., 2020):

Correlation Analysis: To examine the relationships between social media exposure, body image perception, and CPS intentions.

Regression Analysis: To predict the influence of independent variables (e.g., social media use, attitudes, subjective norms) on dependent variables (e.g., intentions to undergo CPS).

ANOVA (Analysis of Variance): To compare means across different groups and determine if there are significant differences in CPS intentions based on demographic variables.

Chi-Square Tests: To explore the association between categorical variables such as gender and the likelihood of considering CPS.

These statistical methods helped understand the complex interplay between social media influence and CPS behaviors, providing robust evidence to support the research hypotheses.

Ethical Considerations

Before data collection, this study's Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Kansas State University. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Participants' confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process, and no names or other forms of identifiers were collected in their responses.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study, which explored the influence of social media use on attitudes, beliefs, and intentions regarding cosmetic and plastic surgery (CPS) among social media users in Kuwait. The chapter begins by outlining the sample's descriptive statistics, including demographic variables such as age, gender, education level, and social media usage patterns. This provides a clear understanding of the composition of the study participants. Following the descriptive analysis, the chapter delves into the hypotheses testing, where the relationships between key variables—such as social media use, exposure to Western beauty standards, attitudes towards CPS, subjective norms, and intentions to undergo CPS—are analyzed using statistical techniques. Correlation analysis, chi-square test, independent sample t-test, and hierarchical regression are employed to assess the strength and significance of these relationships.

Survey Demographics

The study initially gathered data from 327 participants. However, 27 entries were removed due to incomplete responses (almost 90% missing data), leaving a final sample of 300 participants for analysis. The demographic breakdown of the sample is provided in Table 1, covering key variables such as age, gender, education level, income, marital status, and occupational status. The age distribution of the respondents shows that the majority fall within the 30-39 age group, representing 38.2% of the total sample ($n = 112$). The next largest age group is 40-49, comprising 27.6% ($n = 81$) of the respondents.

Table 1: Survey Demographics

		n	%
Age	18-29	62	21.2
	30-39	112	38.2
	40-49	81	27.6
	50-59	29	9.9
	60-69	8	2.7
	70+	1	.3
Gender	Male	128	44.4
	Female	137	47.6
	I prefer not to say	23	8.0
Education level	High school graduate	12	4.1
	Some college	6	2.1
	Bachelor's degree	189	64.9
	Higher education (Postgraduate)	84	28.9
Income (Kuwaiti Dinar)	Less than 10,000	29	10.0
	10,001 - 20,000	48	16.5
	20,001 - 30,000	88	30.2
	30,001 - 40,000	69	23.7
	More than 40,000	57	19.6
Marital status	Single	144	50.3
	Married	80	28.0
	Divorced	50	17.5
	Widow/widower	12	4.2
Occupational status	Student	73	24.9
	Employed	168	57.3
	Non-employed	50	17.1
	Others	2	.7

The youngest age group, 18-29, makes up 21.2% ($n = 62$) of the participants, while those aged 50-59 account for 9.9% ($n = 29$). A small portion of the respondents are older, with 2.7% ($n = 8$) aged 60-69 and 0.3% ($n = 1$) aged 70 or older. Regarding gender, the sample is relatively balanced, with 47.6% of the participants identifying as female ($n = 137$) and 44.4% as male ($n = 128$). A minority of 8.0% ($n = 23$) chose not to disclose their gender. In terms of education, a significant majority of the participants hold a bachelor's degree (64.9%, $n = 189$), while 28.9% ($n = 84$) have completed higher education (postgraduate). A small proportion of respondents have lower levels of education, with 4.1% ($n = 12$) being high school graduates and 2.1% ($n = 6$) having some college education.

The participants' income levels vary, with the largest group earning between 20,001 and 30,000 Kuwaiti dinars per year, accounting for 30.2% ($n = 88$) of the sample. The second-largest group, at 23.7% ($n = 69$), earns between 30,001 and 40,000 Kuwaiti dinars, followed by 19.6% ($n = 57$), earning more than 40,000 Kuwaiti dinars. Meanwhile, 16.5% ($n = 48$) report an annual income between 10,001 and 20,000 Kuwaiti dinars, and 10.0% ($n = 29$) earn less than 10,000 Kuwaiti dinars. In terms of marital status, half of the respondents are single (50.3%, $n = 144$), while 28.0% ($n = 80$) are married. Additionally, 17.5% ($n = 50$) of the participants are divorced, and 4.2% ($n = 12$) identify widows/widowers. Finally, most participants are employed (57.3%, $n = 168$), while 24.9% ($n = 73$) are students. 17.1% ($n = 50$) of the sample are non-employed, and 0.7% ($n = 2$) identified as being in the "other" category for occupational status.

Participants were asked if they had performed CPS for medical reasons or not. The results show that among the 119 participants who reported having undergone cosmetic or plastic surgery (CPS), only 7 individuals (5.9%) did so for medical reasons. In contrast, the vast majority, 112 individuals (94.1%), underwent CPS for non-medical reasons. This indicates that

most participants who performed CPS did so for aesthetic or other non-medical motivations, with only a tiny percentage citing medical necessity as their primary reason.

A chi-square test of independence was conducted to examine the relationship between gender and whether participants had performed cosmetic or plastic surgery (CPS). The results indicated a statistically significant association between gender and performing CPS, $\chi^2 (2, N = 288) = 23.33, p < .001$. Examination of the crosstabulation shows that a higher proportion of females (75 out of 137) had performed CPS compared to males (33 out of 128). The “Prefer not to say” group also had a relatively minor number of individuals who had performed CPS (11 out of 23).

A second chi-square test examined the relationship between marital status and whether participants had performed CPS. The results revealed no significant association between marital status and performing CPS, $\chi^2 (3, N = 286) = 2.10, p > .05$. The distribution of CPS performance did not differ significantly across marital status categories, suggesting that marital status is not a significant predictor of whether someone has undergone cosmetic or plastic surgery. These results indicate that gender is significantly associated with CPS performance, while marital status is not.

Descriptives of Study Variables

This section presents the descriptive statistics for the key variables examined in the study, including social media use, exposure to Western beauty standards, body image perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and intentions regarding cosmetic and plastic surgery (CPS). Table 2 presents the survey variables' means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's alpha values.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of survey variables

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach α
Use of social media (12 items)	2.88	.68	.70
Exposure to Western beauty standards (5 items)	3.93	.78	.88
Positive perceptions of body image (5 items)	2.59	.93	.88
Negative perceptions of body image (5 items)	3.84	.86	.91
Attitudes towards CPS (5 items)	3.35	.84	.88
Intentions to undergo CPS (5 items)	3.52	.83	.88
Beliefs regarding CPS (5 items)	3.50	.71	.85
Concerns and Risks involved in CPS (3 items)	3.28	.70	.84
Perceived subjective norms of CPS (5 items)	3.46	.76	.75

Participants reported moderate levels of use of social media ($M = 2.88$, $SD = .68$, $\alpha = .70$), while exposure to Western beauty standards was relatively high ($M = 3.93$, $SD = .78$, $\alpha = .88$). Respondents had lower positive perceptions of body image ($M = 2.59$, $SD = .93$, $\alpha = .88$) compared to negative perceptions of body image ($M = 3.84$, $SD = .86$, $\alpha = .91$). In terms of attitudes toward cosmetic and plastic surgery (CPS), participants showed moderately positive attitudes ($M = 3.35$, $SD = .84$, $\alpha = .88$) and intentions to undergo CPS ($M = 3.52$, $SD = .83$, $\alpha = .88$). Beliefs and concerns about CPS were similar, with beliefs regarding CPS averaging ($M = 3.50$, $SD = .71$, $\alpha = .85$) and concerns and risks involved ($M = 3.28$, $SD = .70$, $\alpha = .84$). Lastly, participants reported moderate perceived subjective norms of CPS ($M = 3.46$, $SD = .76$, $\alpha = .75$), indicating the influence of social pressures regarding these procedures. All variables showed acceptable internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from .70 to .91, indicating reliable measurement of the constructs.

Hypotheses and Research Question Testing

Correlation analysis, t-test, and hierarchical regression were conducted to test this study's hypotheses and research questions, examine the relationships between variables, and identify significant predictors. The variables of interest are social media use, attitudes, intentions, subjective norms, and beliefs regarding CPS. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) values and their significance levels, as shown in Table 3, are used to assess the strength and direction of relationships between social media use and these motivational factors.

Table 3: Inter-correlation of study variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Use of social media	1								
2. Exposure to Western beauty standards	.314**	1							
3. Positive perceptions of body image	-.081	-.139*	1						
4. Negative perceptions of body image	.361**	.636**	-.116*	1					
5. Attitudes towards CPS	.172**	.178**	.231**	.156**	1				
6. Intentions to undergo CPS	.195**	.287**	.114	.364**	.462**	1			
7. Beliefs regarding CPS	.211**	.261**	.131*	.324**	.552**	.543**	1		
8. Concerns and Risks involved in CPS	-.040	.146*	.151**	.146*	.434**	.353**	.414**	1	
9. Perceived subjective norms of CPS	.302**	.308**	.192**	.347**	.488**	.483**	.541**	.330**	1

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The first hypothesis (H1) predicted that the frequency of social media use influences motivation (attitudes, beliefs, intentions, subjective norms) for Cosmetic and Plastic Surgery in Kuwait. The results show that frequency of social media use was significantly correlated with all

the motivational factors for cosmetic and plastic surgery (CPS), including *attitudes towards CPS* ($r = .172, p < .01$), *intentions to undergo CPS* ($r = .195, p < .01$), *beliefs regarding CPS* ($r = .211, p < .01$), and *perceived subjective norms of CPS* ($r = .302, p < .01$). These positive correlations suggest that higher social media usage is associated with greater motivation to engage in CPS in terms of attitudes, intentions, beliefs, and subjective norms.

The second hypothesis (H2) predicted that exposure to Western beauty standards on social media is correlated with perceptions of body image (positive or negative) among social media users in Kuwait. The results show that *Exposure to Western beauty standards* was significantly negatively correlated with *positive perceptions of body image* ($r = -.139, p < .05$) and significantly positively correlated with *negative perceptions of body image* ($r = .636, p < .01$). This indicates that increased exposure to Western beauty standards on social media is associated with more negative perceptions of body image and reduced positive perceptions of body image.

The third hypothesis (H3) predicted that Kuwait's social media users' exposure to Western beauty standards influences their attitudes towards cosmetic and plastic surgery (CPS), which conditions their intention to undergo CPS. The results show that *Exposure to Western beauty standards* was significantly correlated with both *attitudes towards CPS* ($r = .178, p < .01$) and *intentions to undergo CPS* ($r = .287, p < .01$). This suggests that greater exposure to Western beauty standards leads to more favorable attitudes towards CPS, which, in turn, are associated with an increased intention to undergo CPS.

The fourth hypothesis (H4) predicted that perceived subjective norms (media use, family, friends, aesthetic appeal) influence Kuwait social media users' motivation to engage in CPS. The results show that *Perceived subjective norms of CPS* were significantly correlated with several

motivational factors, including *attitudes towards CPS* ($r = .488, p < .01$), *intentions to undergo CPS* ($r = .483, p < .01$), and *beliefs regarding CPS* ($r = .541, p < .01$). This suggests that subjective norms, such as influences from media, family, and friends, strongly influence social media users' motivation to engage in CPS. All four hypotheses were supported, with significant correlations between social media use, exposure to Western beauty standards, and motivation (attitudes, intentions, beliefs, and subjective norms) related to CPS.

The first research question (RQ1) focused on the significant predictors of body image perception. As shown in Table 4, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the perceptions of body image of individuals who have performed cosmetic or plastic surgery (CPS) and those who have not.

Table 4: Independent sample t-test on perception of body image

	Performed CPS	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Positive body image	Yes	-.39	291	.348
	No			
Negative body image	Yes	1.85	289	.066
	No			

Results showed no significant difference in *positive perceptions of body image* between those who have performed CPS ($M = 2.56, SD = .89$) and those who have not ($M = 2.61, SD = .97$), $t(291) = -0.39, p > .05$. For *negative perceptions of body image*, there was insignificant difference between those who have performed CPS ($M = 3.98, SD = .72$) and those who have not ($M = 3.80, SD = .86$), $t(289) = 1.85, p > .05$. This suggests that individuals who have performed CPS may not have any difference perceptions of their body image in summary, there were no significant differences in positive body image perceptions, and insignificant difference in negative body image perceptions between those who had undergone CPS and those who had not.

The second research question (RQ2) focused on the significant predictors of the subjective norms influencing CPS intention. Hierarchical regression was performed with demographic factors (age, education level, and income) entered in the first model, as shown in Table 5. The model was not significant [$F(3,281) = 2.017, p > .05$], accounting for 2% of the variance ($R^2 = .021$).

Table 5: Subjective norms that influence the intention of Cosmetic and Plastic Surgery (CPS)

Model	Predictors	β	t	R^2
1	Age	.042	0.648	.021
	Education level	.146	2.397*	
	Income	-.063	-0.950	
2	Age	.032	0.569	.300
	Education level	.127	2.426*	
	Income	-.067	-1.167	
	Essential people in CPS decision	-.074	-1.105	
	Friends' views on CPS	.104	1.372	
	Celebrities' views on CPS	.065	0.935	
	Motivation by CPS's social acceptance	.222	3.120**	
	Support boosts CPS motivation	.293	4.455**	

* $P < .05$ level, ** $P < .001$, β = standardized coefficients

Adding subjective norms, attitudes, and motivations for CPS in the second model retained significance [$F(8,276) = 14.785, p < .01$], accounting for 30% of the variance ($R^2 = .300$). Significant predictors include education level, motivation by CPS's social acceptance, support boosting CPS motivation, and friends' views on CPS. Age and income were not significant predictors in the final model.

The third research question (RQ3) focused on factors influencing intention to undergo CPS. Hierarchical regression was performed, as shown in table 6. The demographic factors (age, education level, and income) were entered in the first model, which was not significant [$F(3,278) = 2.10, p > .05$], accounting for only 2% of the variance ($R^2 = .022$).

Table 6: Predictors of Intention to Undergo Cosmetic and Plastic Surgery (CPS)

Model	Predictors	β	t	R^2
1	Age	.047	0.728	.022
	Education level	.149	2.431*	
	Income	-.045	-0.680	
2	Age	.032	0.599	.403
	Education level	.099	2.002*	
	Income	-.004	-0.064	
	Use of social media	-.004	-0.060	
	Exposure to Western beauty standards	.026	0.408	
	Positive perceptions of body image	.025	0.482	
	Negative perceptions of body image	.158	2.438*	
	Attitudes towards CPS	.139	2.206*	
	Beliefs regarding CPS	.254	3.980**	
	Concerns and Risks Involved in CPS	.098	1.759	
	Perceived subjective norms of CPS	.181	2.911*	

* $P < .05$ level, ** $P < .001$, β = standardized coefficients

In the second model, subjective norms, attitudes, and perceptions were added, significantly improving the model fit [$F(11,270) = 16.54, p < .01$], accounting for 40% of the

variance ($R^2 = .403$). Significant predictors included beliefs regarding CPS ($\beta = .306, p < .01$), motivation by CPS's social acceptance ($\beta = .293, p < .01$), and support for CPS motivation ($\beta = .222, p < .01$). Other significant factors were positive perceptions of body image ($\beta = .161, p > .05$) and subjective norms of CPS ($\beta = .201, p < .05$), indicating that beliefs, social motivations, and body image perceptions play vital roles in influencing intention to undergo CPS.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Implication, and Conclusions

Introduction

This chapter synthesizes the study's key findings and examines their broader implications. It discusses how the results align with or challenge existing literature, explores the study's contribution to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), and highlights the practical applications of the findings for public health, cosmetic and plastic surgery practices, and mental health interventions. Finally, the chapter reflects on the limitations of the research and offers recommendations for future studies.

Discussion

Social Media Influence on Body Image

The first and highly relevant generalization of the study under analysis lies in stressing the paramount role of social media in the Kuwaiti females' body image source, including the internalization of the thin-beautiful Western standard. The findings show that Western slant's effects on beauty standards and sharing images on social media are also significant concerns affecting social media users in Kuwait. This finding follows the second hypothesis (H2) formulated for the current research, which stated that Western beauty standards would have positive and negative relationships with body image perceptions. The results indicated a negative Pearson coefficient correlation between the degree of exposure to these standards and positive bodily image ($r = -.139, p < .05$), and a positive correlation with negative perceptions ($r = .636, p < .01$). This corresponds with past studies where it was established that constant exposure to unrealistic beauty standards on social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok results in body image distortion especially in women (Aparicio-Martínez et al., 2019; Fardouly et al., 2015). In Kuwait, the effects are daily messages from social networks, television, movies, and

other media sources, where skinny, fair skin and certain facial features are prized. It is high, and additionally, the mentioned ideals are well incorporated into the culture through the application of programs like Instagram, where celebrities endorse cosmetic surgeries and unrealistic images. This is in congruence with Hypothesis 3, which stated that exposure to Western beauty standards would inform perceptions towards CPS, thus translating to more tendencies of performing the same. The analysis revealed positive attitudes toward CPS to be positively related to CP exposure ($r=.178, p<.01$) to be also positively related to the intention to undergo such surgeries ($r=.287, p<.01$).

In Kuwait, this is exacerbated by cultural norms where, pre, importantly, the audience is placed in focus, emphasizing traditional beauty by cultivating modesty and natural looks in Yemeni women while at the same time remaining pressured by global standards of beauty. These findings support other research that utilized social media to explore societies' increased embrace of cosmetic surgery to achieve the approval of cultural norms and boost self-esteem (Cohen et al., 2019; Markey & Markey, 2009). The findings of the study also show differences in gender on how social media affects the perception of body image in Kuwait. The social-cultural pressure that has cropped up is that of being associated with the Western standards of beauty, and this affects women more than men. Women affirmed that they had higher OS and a greater desire for cosmetic surgery. This supported the study's hypothesis H4: The perceived community and media influences would significantly influence CPS intentions in women. This accords with research by Sari et al. (2022) showing how unfavorable social media-induced body image comparisons affect women more than men.

Different societal pressures were identified for the men, which affect them more in terms of muscularity and fitness adequacy than in surgery. This is a result of the changing figure of

sexually desirable male body image in Kuwait, with progressive stress on grooming and fitness, but not cosmetic surgeries like their female counterparts (Penn, 2020).

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and CPS Intentions

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) was used to guide the identification of predictors of CPS intentions in this study. TPB maintains that intention is influenced mainly by attitudes, perceived norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1985). Within the present research, these constructs were screened to understand their link and impact on CPS intentions in the people of Kuwait. The results demonstrate a highly significant positive relationship between the CPS attitude and the willingness to undertake the procedures. According to the findings, H1 was confirmed; therefore, as the value of attitudes increased by one unit, the observed intention to go for surgery also increased ($\beta=.139, p<.01$). This result supports a core principle of the TPB that suggests that attitudes – or all personal evaluations of behavior are an essential determinant of intentions. The pattern of results is similar to past research, which has shown that having positive beliefs regarding cosmetic procedures predicts using these procedures to address appearance and self-esteem issues (Henderson & Brooks, 2009).

Moreover, the fact that attitudes moderate the intention to gardens with the enhancement of CPS found that Kuwait now embraces cosmetic enhancements and sees them as necessary to uplift one's value in society. This aligns with findings from other countries, whereby those people with positive attitudes towards CPS were more likely to either contemplate or undertake the processes (Markey & Markey, 2009).

Subjective norms were also a significant predictor of CPS intentions of the study participants with a correlation coefficient of ($\beta=.483, p<.01$). This result partially supports Hypothesis 4 (H4), where it was hypothesized that subjective norms have a significant effect on

CPS motivation. According to TPB, perceived social norms enhance an individual's intention to undertake cosmetology surgery. This finding has supported previous research by stating that subjective norms are strong variables predictors in health-related behaviors, especially when it is a question of elective surgery related to societal beauty standards (Cialdini et al., 1990). They added that the effect of subjective norms is also supported by the impact made by social media influencers, including beauty and fashion icons. As mentioned in the results, experiments with photos of celebrities and influencers on Instagram and TikTok are positively associated with the intentions to undergo the CPS ($\beta = .181, p < .05$). At the same time, Kuwaitis look towards social validation by seeking agreement from social media personalities, similar to previous work in other cultures (Cohen et al., 2019).

Subjective norms, operationalized as perceived social pressure to perform the desired behavior, were also significant predictors of CPS intentions. The findings of this research confirm Hypothesis 1 (H1) to the extent that perceived subjective norms had a positive impact on CPS intentions ($\beta = .158, p < .05$). This is in accordance with other research which shows that the perceived barriers have a direct relationship with cosmetic surgery decisions (Tang et al., 2022). The affordability of the surgery and availability in Kuwait has probably put much strength in perceived control and intentions. This is supported by the hierarchical regression test since beliefs in personal control of the surgery process were a predictor ($R = .254, p < 0.01$).

Overall, the results confirm the primary hypotheses of the study. Hypothesis 1 (H1) was supported, which predicted a relationship between social media use and motivation for CPS through attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. The study also verified Hypothesis 4 (H4), showing that subjective norms, including influences from friends, family, and media, significantly contribute to CPS intentions. Finally, Hypothesis 3 (H3), which predicted

that exposure to Western beauty standards would condition attitudes and intentions toward CPS, was also supported, reflecting the complex interplay between social media, cultural beauty standards, and individual decision-making in Kuwait.

The findings reveal no significant difference in positive body image perceptions between individuals who have undergone cosmetic surgery and those who have not, as indicated in research question 1 (RQ1). This indicates that performing cosmetic surgery does not necessarily lead to enhanced self-image, aligning with studies suggesting that surgery can alter physical appearance but does not guarantee improved self-perception (Martinez et al., 2023). In contrast, negative body image perceptions showed only marginal differences, suggesting that dissatisfaction with one's appearance persists, regardless of surgical intervention. These results challenge the assumption that cosmetic surgery effectively resolves negative body image concerns, highlighting the complex psychological factors influencing body satisfaction.

Subjective norms, particularly social acceptance and the views of close acquaintances, significantly influence individuals' intentions to undergo cosmetic procedures (RQ2). Regression analysis demonstrated that the opinions of friends and support from significant others boost the likelihood of considering cosmetic surgery ($\beta = .293, p < .01$), highlighting the role of social pressure in shaping decisions about personal appearance. However, the influence of celebrities and influencers was less pronounced ($\beta = .065, p > .05$), suggesting that while public figures can set beauty standards, the opinions of immediate social circles often hold more sway in personal decision-making.

The study identified vital predictors influencing individuals' intentions to undergo cosmetic surgery, with subjective norms and personal attitudes playing a central role (RQ3). Attitudes towards cosmetic surgery, shaped by exposure to Western beauty ideals, strongly

correlated with increased interest in surgery ($\beta = .254, p < .01$). The findings underscore the impact of social media platforms in perpetuating unattainable beauty standards, contributing to body dissatisfaction and motivating individuals to pursue cosmetic alterations as a form of social validation. These results are consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior, which posits that intentions are influenced by perceived societal norms and personal attitudes.

Theoretical Implications

The results of this study contribute to the development of the TPB in the Kuwaiti context and explore the role of social media on people's CPS intentions. The TPB best understood CPS intentions in Kuwait, which deals with attitudes and subjective norms. The study's findings align with TPB's postulates, both as a theory constructing social prediction and as an analysis tool, providing more novel insights on the relationship between social media, culture, and other aspects involving major concerns about health-related behaviors.

In Western contexts, TPB has been applied to anticipate healthy behaviors. However, when TPB is used to fill the Kuwait socio-cultural context, Due to a mix of Bedouin cultural heritage and affiliated lifestyle with twentieth-century global culture, Kuwait serves as an ideal backdrop to study perceptions on CPS. This contribution confirmed the TPB; in particular, it revealed that attitude and subjective norms significantly influenced the CPS intentions. However, the study also shows that social cues regarding what is expected from a girl or woman and culture's role in those expectations shape these constructs somewhat differently than in the Western world. This paper offers evidence to prove that social media plays a vital role in the perception towards CPS, particularly the dissemination of Western arms of beauty contrary to the Kuwaiti culture. The significant and positive correlation with CPS intentions indicated that the more frequently they are exposed to pro-CPS social media images, the more favorable their

attitudes towards it are ($\beta = .139, p < .01$), supporting the TPB postulate where the attitude is a predictor of intention. This study also revealed that perceived behavioral control, a person's self-efficiency to undertake CPS, ranging from financial readiness to resource availability, was a predictor of CPS intention ($\beta = .254, p < .001$).

The subjective norms in Kuwait concerning the opinions of family and friends and the perceived influence of social media also significantly influenced CPS intentions ($\beta = .483, p < .01$). This finding aligns with the TPB model. However, it also reflects the special facilitating conditions of social media, such as Instagram, which increase the perceived social pressure to adhere to beauty norms. In this study, the author posited that due to how social media exposes Kuwaiti consumers to beauty influencers and celebrities as culture bearers who inform normative beliefs about beauty and attractiveness, social media generates a significant CPS push.

Social media, culture, and health-related behavior (CPS), for example, in Kuwait, are examples of how global beauty ideals interplay with local cultural norms. However, this study extends to a critical cultural dimension: modesty and self-presentation-related traditional values moderate the extent of social media's influence. Many of the women living in Kuwait are exposed to the Western beauty standards yet weigh the decisions of CPS against the societal beliefs about the modesty of the women who have this identity. Although TPB provides a complete model of intentions to commit CPS, it must be adapted to consider cultural specificities in non-Western settings, these findings indicate.

This research can be summarized as extending the application of TPB by illustrating the cultural and social influences contributing to CCP intentions in Kuwait. This study again confirms the importance of attitudes and subjective norms in predicting health-related behaviors. Also, it presents some unique views into how social media and a culture's values collide to shape

such behaviors. Knowing this is important to designing culturally sensitive health interventions and policies for meeting the increasing demand for CPS in non-Western societies like Kuwait.

Practical Implications

Study findings reveal that social media makes a significant contribution to body dissatisfaction and high levels of interest in cosmetic and plastic surgery (CPS) among Kuwaitis. All of this means there is a need for such public health policies to regulate how beauty standards are portrayed on social media platforms. The first recommendation is to enforce guidelines that mandate social media platforms and influencers to declare the use of digital enhancements, filters, and cosmetic surgery. This might even go some way to offset the spread of unrealistic beauty ideals propagated by platforms such as Instagram and TikTok that, researchers have shown, exacerbate body image concerns, especially in young women (Aparicio-Martínez et al., 2019; Fardouly et al., 2015). These public health campaigns that encourage body positivity and inclusive notions of beauty are desirable tendencies to counterbalance the overall impact of Western beauty ideals. Such interventions may reduce the incidence of body dissatisfaction, anxiety, and depression associated with social media comparison, which are associated with poor mental health outcomes.

The study provides critical insights for CPS practitioners in Kuwait into the psychosocial factors that influence patients' motivations for surgery. Practitioners need to know that CPS motivations are not just to look good but have at least as much to do with cultural expectations, social media, and internalized beauty standards. Surgeons must incorporate discussions about these motivations during consultations to ensure patients have realistic expectations and to explore whether external pressures, such as societal norms or media portrayals, influence the decision. Understanding the role of subjective norms—family, friends, and social media

influencers—can guide practitioners in providing more comprehensive, ethically grounded care. Practitioners should also be mindful of the cultural duality in Kuwait, where modern global trends coexist with traditional values that emphasize modesty.

The present research underlines the importance of developing mental health interventions to combat body dissatisfaction, especially among young social media users in Kuwait. Body dissatisfaction, which stems from the comparison of oneself with the perfect body as portrayed on social media platforms, has been found to have detrimental effects on the mental health of individuals, leading to poor self-esteem, anxiety, and depression (Cohen et al., 2019). Mental health professionals should provide body image counseling as a standard component of care and assist in changing people's perceptions of their bodies for the better. Moreover, prevention programs that enhance media literacy may help young consumers avoid embracing the ideas presented in social media. Schools and community organizations should engage the services of mental health professionals to conduct sessions that can help the populace understand how social media affects body image and self-esteem.

More so, through PR and advertising campaigns, the media influences the perception of beauty and encourages people to seek cosmetic treatments. These campaigns, usually spearheaded by influencers and celebrities, promote societal beauty standards. Kuwaiti PR vigorously employs Instagram and Snapchat, where beauty influencers advertise cosmetic procedures and display possible Western-like outcomes. Targeted advertising makes cosmetic surgery seem more standard and makes consumers want it when exposed to selected images.

In addition to enhancing the physical advantages of CPS, PR and advertising work on psychological imperatives. These are why young people are more likely to be attracted by cosmetic surgery adverts – to gain confidence, self-esteem, and social acceptance. The current

study's subjective norms results are consistent with these observations, as several participants mentioned that they felt compelled to conform to such standards by friends and celebrities. Thus, PR and advertising campaigns are critical to CPS decision-making; thus, the regulatory standards should embrace ethical promotion of products to avoid misleading consumers in the name of profit-making.

CPS practitioners and policymakers should recognize these campaigns to encourage realistic and diverse representations of beauty. Educating the public on media literacy programs that explain how advertising campaigns impact the perception of beauty lowers the pressure from such content and enhances body image. Therefore, mental health interventions must address the cultural and social factors identified in this study to enhance the self-esteem and body image of young people in Kuwait, thereby decreasing the psychological pressure to conform to unattainable beauty standards.

Limitations of the Study

Even though this study has yielded much success, it has main research weaknesses regarding the sample and the data collection methods. However, even though 300 participants can help assess intent to CPS and the effects of social networking sites on Body Image, it will not represent the entire populace of Kuwait. They used a convenience sampling method that limits the generalization ability of the observed outcomes. Another type of sampling bias is self-selecting bias. This arises because only crowds friendly to the researcher and those willing to be used for the study were grouped. This means that the respondents who spend most of their time on social media or have had an initial interest in cosmetic surgeries could have offered far more responses than other nonsocial media users.

One of the limitations is the restriction in using self-reported data, in which the respondents only filled out the survey online. A strength of this method is the possibility of collecting adequate data within the context of social media, which is widely spread in Kuwait but has a response bias. The respondents may have made biased responses, especially where the respondents participating in the study were in a group, their borrowed physical appearance, and the fact that the study has a cosmetic surgery element caused a biased result. However, the cross-sectional data in the study limits the research to examining coefficients of social media exposure with the perceptions of body image and the CPS intentions.

For a similar reason, it would be strategically impossible for the study results to be generalized to a broader cultural and geographical scale. These findings are cross-sectional and based explicitly on Kuwaiti social media users; they cannot be generalized to other Middle Eastern or global users. Most Kuwaitis are nomads or Bedouin people and represent a combination of native and international trends regarding aesthetics and ethical standards. Such cultural features affect how individuals 'deem' their bodies and how they can choose in favor of or against aesthetic surgery. Therefore, it may be due to ordinary pressure and differences in the standard of beauty; the findings of this study cannot be generalized to non-Kuwaiti or non-Arab people.

Similarly, applying the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as the orienting theory in this study was beneficial. However, experience with culturally and religiously diverse non-Western nations may not be transferable. For instance, perceived control on behavior, that is, on performing Cosmetic surgery and aesthetic expectations in a given society, will differ significantly between liberal and religious or conservative societies. This requires more research

to establish the relationship between social media, cultural norms, and health-related behaviors within different cultures.

Recommendations for Future Research

One glaring omission is the impact of social media on body image – over time and in parts of the world such as Kuwait. Most prior works, including this one, use statistical cross-sectional data that gives short-term correlations rather than long-term trends or causation. Finally, future studies need to include the concept of time because simply attributing the correlates of social media to the effects suggests the problem will worsen over time as users spend more time exposed to the messages they disseminate. These studies could help to decide whether body image detrimental effects increased across time due to exposure to thin beauty idealizations or whether individuals managed to develop body image coping strategies and media literacy-fostering mechanisms through more exposure to thin beauty idealizations.

This social media should prompt cross-cultural research to understand the effects of social media on the perception of body image. Exploratory research options for this study include comparing the specific experiences of Kuwait, where traditional values merge with global standards of beauty, to similar research done in other Middle Eastern countries or across the world. For example, research could contrast the impact of social media on the perception of body image in societies from Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which adheres to Islamic rules and conventions, and in societies with liberal values and which embrace Westernization. Kwan et al. mentioned that more such comparisons would give an understanding of how cultural norms account for social media and body image dissatisfaction.

Extending this information source and identifying the extent to which particular microblogs alter BMI perceptions and CPS intentions is another implication. Different platforms

like Instagram and TikTok have different content – short-form videos, filters, and carefully selected images may influence the interaction of users with ideas of beauty in their manner. The trend is that platforms that promote visual content, such as Instagram, are likely to result in higher body dissatisfaction than platforms that promote textual content, such as Twitter or Facebook. Furthermore, the modulation of beauty influencers and the effects of algorithmically generated content (such as ‘fitspiration’ or ‘thinspiration’) feeds should be discussed to investigate how these features help the internalization process of aesthetics.

However, this study recruited Kuwaiti men or women only; future research needs to plan for the vulnerable groups that are vulnerable or may be easily influenced by SNS, such as adolescents, people with underlying body image issues, or low self-esteem. Specifically, because adolescents are so vulnerable to social media pressures in general, the adolescent experience in Kuwait, a traditionally conservative country where students are still taught strict gender roles, but which is also saturated with media influences from around the world, merits additional research. Such research could analyze how effective specific interventions with these groups are in protecting them from the negative impact of social media on body image.

Framing theory could be implemented to discuss the findings of this thesis further. The theory suggests that how information is presented (or "framed") influences perceptions and behaviors (Chong et al., 2007). In the case of this project, framing theory could consider how body-related information shared on social media enables particular framings of beauty impact. Some recommendations could engage social media networks and influencers to use framing that depicts low-stress beauty standards, not imitating beauty standards of Western countries, possibly diminishing motives for CPS linked with body dissatisfaction.

The Health Belief Model (HBM) could also be implemented to discuss the findings of this study properly. The model posits that individuals' decisions about health behaviors are influenced by their perceptions of severity, susceptibility, benefits, and barriers (Champions et al., 2008). Self-efficacy could be applicable because this project used a similar measure from HBM: perceived risk and perceived severity of undergoing CPS. It would be helpful for future studies to explore the relationship between perceived health risk and perceived health benefit to peoples' attitudes toward CPS in Kuwait by underlying aesthetic or reconstructive surgery environments. The stress placed on HBM variables in social media-based education programs could also sensitize the users to the risks and benefits of CPS more appropriately.

Thus, future studies should investigate whether using media literacy interventions to teach social media users how to evaluate the content can be effective. These interventions could potentially decrease the detrimental effects of SM on body image by teaching people the difference between natural and altered representations and questioning beauty norms that are so prevalent in SM. These longitudinal investigations may show whether enhancing national media literacy improves body image and decreases the contemplation of cosmetic surgery.

By addressing these areas, future research can deepen our understanding of social media's long-term impact on body image and help develop targeted interventions to mitigate its harmful effects.

Conclusion

This study adds to the existing body of knowledge on the impact of social media on body image and CPS intentions in Kuwait and, more specifically, in the TPB context. The findings provide evidence that social media exposure to Western beauty standards has an active influence on the impressions of BIA and the intentions of CPS. More precisely, perceived control,

attitudes, and norms are the essential factors affecting the intentions to use CPS in Kuwait, which has developed an extension of TPB to non-Western countries.

Another essential discovery is that more and more social media platforms contribute to the dissemination of thin/toned ideals with the further intensification of body dissatisfaction, especially among women. This is in line with the literature presented in this paper and other papers showing that the influence of social media on body image is prevalent across various societies worldwide. It was also found that Kuwaiti women had higher body dissatisfaction with their bodies than Kuwaiti men due to the social unrelenting of the Kuwaiti society that only accepts thin as beautiful and the powerful impact of Western orientation. In contrast, concerns about fitness and muscularity were significantly higher in men, patterns which are considered to be associated with different sorts of perceived social pressures.

From a practical point of view, the findings have potentially significant public health and clinical relevance. It is a general recommendation for public health to address body images to encourage social media sites to limit the amount of beauty standards depicted to the general public. Educational interventions also in the form of positive media and body image advertising could help negate the effects of social media on mental health. Cosmetic surgeons and practitioners in Kuwait must take this study to realize this and focus on their actions' cultural and psychosocial causes, making practices more ethical and culturally responsive.

The significance of these findings in terms of larger sociological and health writing is immense. As the population of Kuwait strives towards progressive changes in the country by integrating traditional and imported values and cultures, the concepts of moderation and beautification are significantly confusing for the population's health. Overcoming these challenges by culturally appropriate intervention for promoting positive body image and critical

media consumption becomes paramount to reversing the increasing demand for CPS and enhancing the self-image of Kuwait.

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Appendix 1: Survey Questionnaire

Dear Friend,

You are invited to participate in a research study titled "Social Media Influence on Self-Image and Motivation for Cosmetic and Plastic Surgery in Kuwait." This academic study aims to investigate our perceptions and attitudes towards cosmetic and plastic surgery in Kuwait. If you agree to participate in this study, you will complete an online questionnaire. It will take you about 20 minutes to complete the survey.

The study is approved by Kansas State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB#12260). No known risks are associated with this research study; however, you may stop anytime if you feel uncomfortable responding to any questions.

By continuing with this survey, you affirm that your participation is optional, you are at least 18 years of age, and agree that the information may be used in the research project described above.

To continue with this survey, click "Continue" or "Exit" to leave the survey.

- Continue

- Exit

Filter Questions

Are you a Kuwaiti individual?

A. Yes

B. No (skip logic to exit survey)

Are you aged 18+?

A. Yes

B. No (skip logic to exit survey)

Q1

In the following question, please tell us how frequently you use the following social media platform daily.

Social media	Never (1-2 hours)	Very Little Time (2-3 hours)	Moderate Amount of Time (3-4 hours)	Most of the Time (4-5 hours)	All the Time (Longer than 5 hours)
Facebook					
Instagram					
X (formerly Twitter)					
TikTok					
LinkedIn					
Snapchat					
Pinterest					
YouTube					
Google+					
Tumblr					
WhatsApp					
Other (specify)					

Q2A

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement by selecting the appropriate option from the scale provided.

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I frequently encounter cosmetic and plastic surgery content on social media.					
I feel more inclined to consider cosmetic and plastic surgery after viewing such content on social media.					
Social media content about cosmetic and plastic surgery enhances my knowledge about these procedures.					
After watching social media content on cosmetic surgery, I believe that social media is a reliable source of information.					
I often feel pressure to conform to the beauty standards I see on social media.					

Q2B

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement by selecting the appropriate option from the scale provided.

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Exposure to Western beauty standards on social media positively influences my body image.					
I frequently view the images of beauty on social media as favorable comparisons for my body image.					
The positive feedback on cosmetic surgery posts on social media impacts my self-esteem.					
Positive comments on social media about different body types boost my self-image.					
Social media inspired me to embrace my unique beauty and body positivity.					

Q2C

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement by selecting the appropriate option from the scale provided.

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Seeing Western beauty standards on social media leads to a negative perception of my body image.					
I believe my self-esteem is negatively affected by the beauty standards depicted on social media.					
I often feel dissatisfied with my body after viewing Western beauty standards on social media.					
I experience negative feelings about my body when comparing it to Western beauty ideals on social media.					
I am more aware of my body's flaws when I see Western beauty standards represented on social media.					

Q3A

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement by selecting the appropriate option from the scale provided.

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I believe that having cosmetic surgery would help me feel better about myself.					
I think cosmetic surgery is an excellent way to improve my self-esteem.					
If I could afford it, I would consider having cosmetic and plastic surgery to make myself feel happier.					
People are more socially rewarded when they improve their appearance through cosmetic and plastic surgery.					
I would seriously consider cosmetic surgery if I thought it would help me advance in my career.					

Q3B

The following questions are designed to know your intentions to undergo cosmetic and plastic surgery, influenced by exposure to Western beauty ideals on social media. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement by selecting the appropriate option from the scale provided.

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am currently considering cosmetic surgery to improve my self-image.					
I see cosmetic surgery as a personal choice that I am likely to make for my satisfaction.					
If a relative underwent cosmetic surgery and were pleased with the results, it would make me more open to considering it					
After viewing Western beauty ideals on social media, I feel more inclined to consider cosmetic and plastic surgery for myself.					
Social media exposure to Western beauty has increased my interest in learning about cosmetic and plastic surgery options.					

Q4

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement by selecting the appropriate option from the scale provided.

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel that people important to me support the decision to engage in cosmetic and plastic surgery (CPS).					
My friends' views on cosmetic and plastic surgery influence my motivation to consider it.					
The opinions of celebrities or influencers on social media about CPS impact my motivation to engage in such procedures.					
I am motivated to consider CPS because I perceive it as a socially accepted practice.					
The encouragement from my social circle would significantly increase my motivation to undergo CPS.					

Q5

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement by selecting the appropriate option from the scale provided.

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I believe that undergoing cosmetic and plastic surgery (CPS) can improve a person's self-esteem.					
In my opinion, the benefits of CPS outweigh any potential risks.					
I feel that people who have had CPS generally strongly influence others in society.					
My attitude towards CPS is positive because it can enhance one's appearance.					
If I believed CPS to be effective, I would be more likely to undergo the procedures myself.					

Q6

Please indicate how likely or unlikely you are to agree with each statement by selecting the appropriate option from the scale provided.

Question	Extremely unlikely	Unlikely	Neither unlikely nor likely	Likely	Extremely likely
Seeing images of cosmetic procedures on social media makes me aware of the potential risks involved.					
I believe that frequent exposure to cosmetic surgery posts on social media could lead someone to underestimate the risks.					
After viewing cosmetic procedure posts on social media, I feel concerned about the possible complications.					

Demographics

- Gender
 - Male
 - Female
 - Prefer not to answer.
- Education: What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- a) Less than high school
 - b) High school graduate
 - c) Some college
 - d) Diploma
 - e) Bachelors degree
 - f) Higher education (e.g., master's and above)
3. What is your yearly income?
 - a) Less than 10,000 Kuwaiti Dinar
 - b) 10,001 - 20,000 Kuwaiti Dinar
 - c) 20,001 - 30,000 Kuwaiti Dinar
 - d) 30,001 - 40,000 Kuwaiti Dinar
 - e) More than 40,000
 4. Marital status
 - a) Single
 - b) Married
 - c) Divorced
 - d) Widow/widower
 5. Occupational status
 - a. Student
 - b. Employed
 - c. Non-employed
 - d. Others

Please answer the following questions to inform us about your experience with CPS.

1. Have you performed CPS?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. If yes, is your intention to perform CPS for medical reasons?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
3. If not, do you intend to perform CPS?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Thank you for your participation. If you have any questions about this research protocol, please contact Mohammed Alfares (malfares@ksu.edu) or Nancy Muturi (nmuturi@ksu.edu). Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant may be directed to Lisa Rubin, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

Appendix 2: IRB Approval Form



TO: Nancy Muturi
AQ Miller School of Media and Communication
Manhattan, KS 66506

Proposal Number: IRB-12260

FROM: Lisa Rubin, Chair
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 06/29/2024

RE: Proposal Entitled, "Social Media Influence on Self-Image and Motivation for Cosmetic and Plastic Surgery in Kuwait."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects / Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Kansas State University has reviewed the proposal identified above and has determined that it is EXEMPT from further IRB review. This exemption applies only to the proposal - as written - and currently on file with the IRB. Any change potentially affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation and may disqualify the proposal from exemption.

Based upon information provided to the IRB, this activity is exempt under the criteria set forth in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, **45 CFR §104(d), category:Exempt Category 2 Subsection ii.**

Certain research is exempt from the requirements of HHS/OHRP regulations. A determination that research is exempt does not imply that investigators have no ethical responsibilities to subjects in such research; it means only that the regulatory requirements related to IRB review, informed consent, and assurance of compliance do not apply to the research.

Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, the University Research Compliance Office, and if the subjects are KSU students, to the Director of the Student Health Center.

Electronically signed by Lisa Rubin on 06/30/2024 12:22 PM ET