

Demographic features of patients seeking cosmetic surgery in southern Nigeria

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Abstract

Background and objectives: The numbers of patients undergoing cosmetic surgery is increasing worldwide, Nigeria inclusive. Whereas several reports abound describing the demographic characteristics of cosmetic surgery recipients in other regions of the world, there are no such reports in Nigeria. The objective of this study is to demonstrate the demographic characteristics of patients undergoing cosmetic surgery in Southern Nigeria.

Methods: This retrospective study reviewed the case records of all patients who had cosmetic procedures at a privately owned aesthetic surgery facility in Port Harcourt, Southern Nigeria from January 2020 to December 2021 (two year period). Information on biodata; age, gender, marital status, and educational level were retrieved and analyzed.

Results: In the period under review, a total of 175 patients had cosmetic surgeries done in the facility. 168 (96%) of patients were females, constituting the vast majority of patients. Only 7 (4%) patients were males. The age range of patients was from 21 years to 57 years, with a mean age of 35 years. 104 (59%) of patients were married, while 71 (41%) patients were single. 154 (88%) had at least tertiary level education. 4 (2.3%) patients only had secondary level of formal education. 17 patients (9.7%) were university/college undergraduates.

Conclusions: The average cosmetic surgery recipient in Southern Nigeria is a young, married, college/university educated female.

Keywords: Demographic; Features; Cosmetic; Southern Nigeria

1. Introduction

Cosmetic surgery is a branch of plastic surgery that involves alteration and improvement in the appearance of the body, in the absence of congenital or acquired pathology, or injury.^{1,2} It is amongst the fastest growing subspecialties of medicine.³ Indications for cosmetic procedures range from enhancement of apparently normal bodily features, to reversing changes associated with aging.⁴

Increasing numbers of cosmetic procedures have been reported in most regions of the world. In the United States of America, 5.7 million cosmetic procedures were performed by the American Society of Plastic Surgeons in 2000. In 2020, 15.6 million cosmetic procedures were performed, representing 174% rise from the 2000 figure.⁵ Similar trends have been reported in Europe, South America, Australia and Asia. Even though there are no reports from Africa, it is likely that the same trends apply. This seismic increase in number of cosmetic procedure owes to a great extent to the influence of the mass media.⁶ The internet with applications like instagram, tiktok, facebook etc define and promote beauty standards, increasing body image self-awareness, altering individual self-esteem and body image with resultant desire for cosmetic enhancements.⁷

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Many studies describe the demographic characteristics of cosmetic surgery recipients in other regions of the world. However in Nigeria and in the African continent at large, there is paucity of articles describing the demographics of patients seeking cosmetic surgeries

This study seeks to demonstrate the demographic characteristics of patients accessing cosmetic surgery in Nigeria.

2. Patients and methods

This is a retrospective study done using case records of all patients who had cosmetic procedures at a privately owned aesthetic surgery facility in Port Harcourt, Southern Nigeria from January 2000 to December 2021 (two year period). Information on biodata; age, gender, marital status, and educational level were retrieved and analyzed

3. Results

In the period under review, a total of 175 patients had cosmetic surgeries done in the facility

3.1. Gender (Figure 1)

Of the total number of patients who had cosmetic surgery in the period, 168 patients were females, constituting the vast majority of patients (96%). Only 7 patients (4%) were males. This gives a female : male ratio of 24 : 1

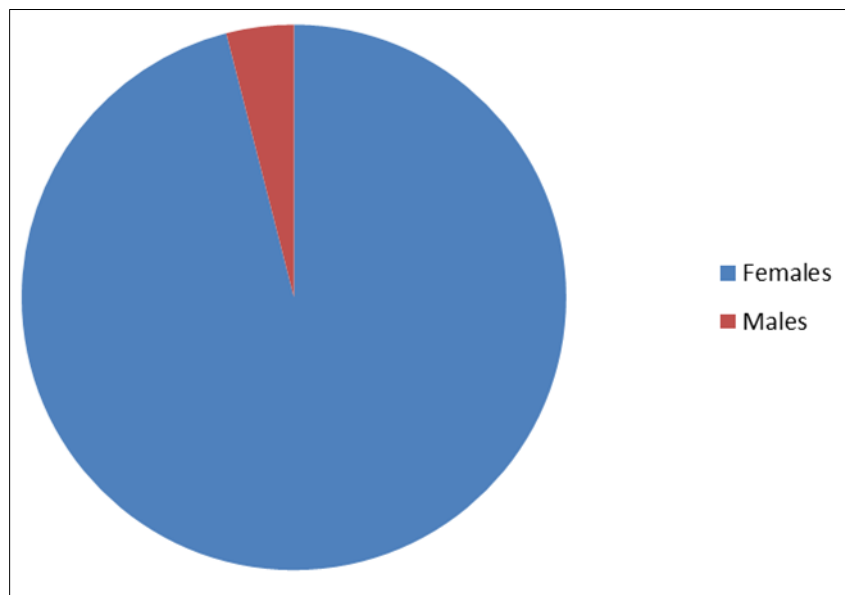


Figure 1 Gender distribution of patients

3.2. Age(Figure 2)

The patients in this study were comprised entirely of young adults and middle aged adults. The age range was from 21 years to 57 years, with a mean age of 35years. There were no children, adolescents and elderly individuals. 122 patients, comprising more than two-thirds of the patients (70%) were young adults, aged between 20 – 39 years (53 patients were in the third decade while 69 patients were in the fourth decade of life). Of the middle aged patients, 45 patients were aged 40 – 49 years, while only 8 patients were between 50-59 years old.

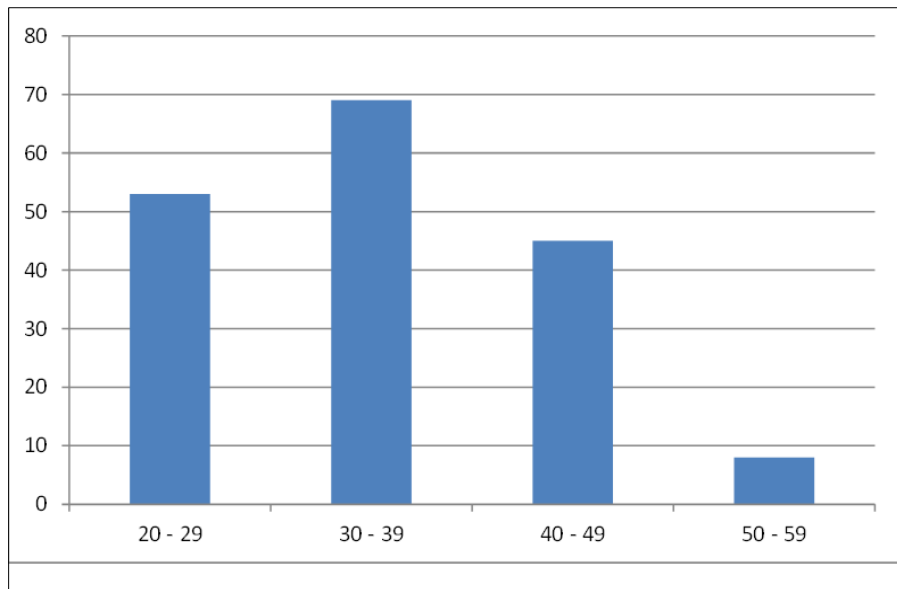


Figure 2 Age distribution of patients (X-axis = Age of Patients; Y-axis = Number of Patients)

3.3. Marital status: (Figure 3).

104 (59%) patients were married, while 71 (41%) patients were single

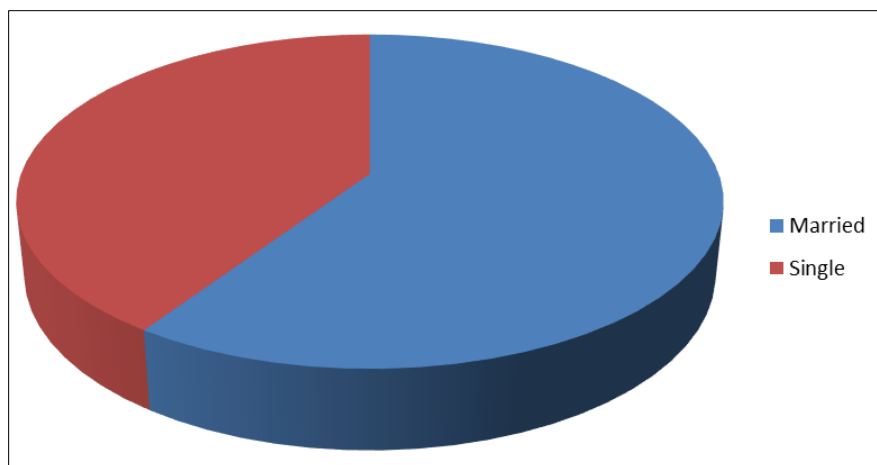


Figure 3 Marital status of patients

3.4. Educational level (Table 1)

Of the 175 patients, 154 (88%) had at least tertiary level education. 4 (2.3%) patients only has secondary level of formal education. The remaining 17 patients (9.7%) were university/college undergraduates

Table 1 Educational level

Educational level	Number	percentage
Secondary level	4	2.3%
University/College undergraduate	17	9.7%
Tertiary education and above	154	88%

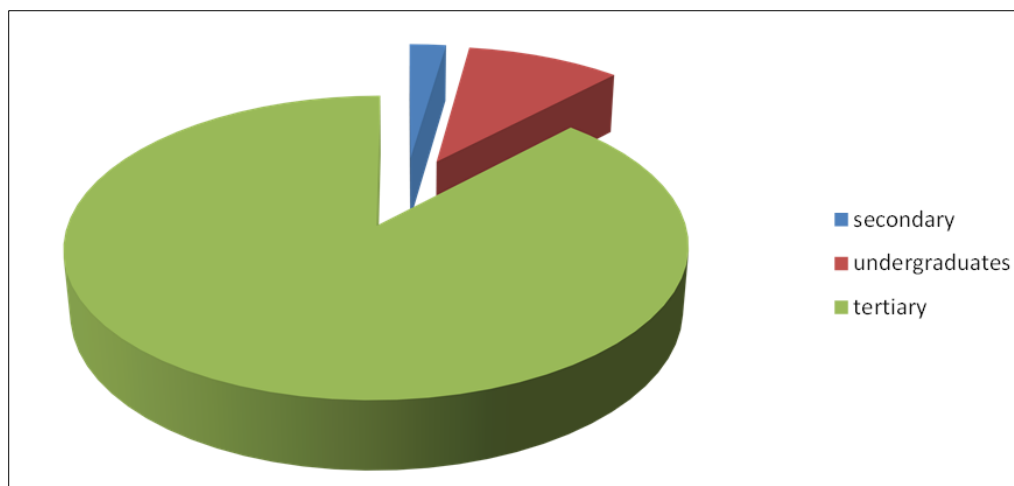


Figure 4 Educational levels

4. Discussion

Cosmetic surgeries are done to maintain, restore, or enhance one's physical appearance. Even though they may not be life-saving procedures, they are psychotherapeutic. Distress and anxiety resulting from self-consciousness of abnormal appearance may be treated by cosmetic surgery.⁸ It is safe to say that cosmetic surgery indeed improves quality of life.

The gender distribution of patients who had cosmetic surgery in our study is mostly in keeping with what is obtainable in other parts of the world.⁹ A previous study in Enugu, Nigeria showed a female preponderance of 77.45%.¹⁰ However, the majority of aesthetic surgeries done in this study were scar revisions. In the Western world, female preponderance of up to 91.8 - 95.6% have been reported.^{5,11} Studies from Asia have shown female preponderance up to 92.5%.¹² These figures are similar to our finding of 96% of cosmetic surgery being undergone by females. These findings are not surprising as females tend to be more concerned about their appearance than the male folks, with associated body image dissatisfaction and fear of negative appearance evaluation.¹³

Some studies in the Asian continent showed the mean age of presentation of patients seeking cosmetic surgery of 35 - 38.4 years.^{14,15} This is similar to the mean age of 35 years in our study. The reason might be that this age group is the most fixated on body appearance, body dissatisfaction, aging anxiety.¹³

In a study in USA, 67.5% of patients who had cosmetic surgery were married.¹¹ Similarly, we had more married patients (59%) than singles in our study, with most having completed their family sizes. The bodily changes associated with pregnancy, child birth and lactation may be the triggers for demand for cosmetic surgery in this group. Indeed most of our married patients say they want to reward themselves with a more youthful body after the stress of pregnancies. 41% of our patients on the other hand were single, many of whom were into entertainment or marketing of cosmetic and beauty products. They believe that an attractive appearance would land them more movie roles and make their products more appealing to the target population respectively. In contrast, one study in Asia showed that only 40% of cosmetic surgery patients were married.¹² A close figure (46.8%) was reported in Saudi Arabia.¹⁶

Educational level is another important variable that clearly affects the likelihood of individuals to seek for cosmetic surgery. 88% of our patients had at least tertiary level of education (University, College, Polytechnics etc). Studies from outside the continent agree with this findings, with figures up to 70%.^{11,12,16,17} In spite of the increasing popularity of cosmetic surgery in our clime, there remains social, religious and cultural stigma towards those who undergo the procedure. It is likely that with higher education, rational thinking, better understanding of the indication and increased safety may be responsible for higher acceptance of cosmetic surgery amongst the better educated subset.

5. Conclusion

Cosmetic surgery in Nigeria is evolving, and the scope expanding. With increasing acceptance amongst the different age, gender, social and cultural demographics, cosmetic surgery in the country is likely going to experience marked growth in the future.

Compliance with ethical standards

Acknowledgments

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

There were no conflicts of interest whatsoever.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent were duly obtained from all the patients.

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