

An Investigation on the Relationship between Narcissism and Body Dysmorphic Disorder in Cosmetic Surgery Applicants

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ABSTRACT

Beauty defects are caused by diseases, aging, or by dissatisfaction with appearance originated from psychological conditions. Sometimes, these situations can be created under the influence of the personality disorders. The present study aims at examining the relationship between narcissism and body dysmorphic disorders in cosmetic surgery applicants. Research methodology in this study is survey type and it uses questionnaire for data collection. Participants consisted of 60 people who referred to Imam Reza Hospital in the city of Mashhad, Iran, for cosmetic surgery. They got scores from 40 to 120 in Body Dysmorphic test. They were also selected through the available sampling methods. The average age of samples was 24.48. Variance and standard deviation were recognized as 23.68 and 17.4 respectively. This paper employs the Multidimensional-self Relations Questionnaire i.e. 46 items (1997), and Personal Belief Questionnaire as measuring tools. Data were analyzed in SPSS version 20 by the use of Pearson's Correlation method. Results showed that there is a significant relationship between narcissism and body dysmorphic disorders in cosmetic surgery applicants so much so that the higher their sense of narcissism is, the more they believe in their body dysmorphic.

Keywords: *Narcissism, Body dysmorphic disorder.*

Nowadays, one of people's concerns and worries is their appearance and body posture, so much that they pay a lot of attention to the way they look (Weil, 2009). In the fourth edition of "A Guide to the Statistical Diagnostic of Mental Disorders", mental disorders are defined as paying careful attention to some of the conceptual disorders in physical appearance. This extreme attention to the appearance takes much time and results in dysfunctions (American Psychiatric Association (APA), 2000). In this regard, scholars of social sciences found out that people associate the outer beauty with some admirable characteristics such as intelligence, competency, attractiveness, and social acceptance.

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Cosmetic surgery would be one of the big concerns for humans and more cosmetic surgeries would be performed to remove people's unhappiness about their appearance and raise their sense of self-esteem (Alamdar & Ghalghe Bandi, 2003). Low self-esteem and the feeling of not having enough physical and sexual attraction leads to more cosmetic surgeries (Besharat, 2008). Low self-esteem and negative physical vision is stressful; therefore, people take certain strategies to overcome stress. Personality traits affect the strategies people take to deal with stress (Mohammad Panah, Yghobi, & Yusefi, 2013).

Sometimes personality disorders affect body vision and narcissism is considered as one of these disorders. Since lack of self-esteem is considered as the most important personal characteristic seen in both body dysmorphic and narcissism, studying narcissistic disorder is an authentic source in understanding sick people who extremely try to get cosmetic surgery. Narcissistic individuals have a fragile self-esteem. They are not satisfied with their appearance; so, to get more satisfaction with their appearance, they undergo cosmetic surgery. Narcissistic individuals want to gain respect by mastering others. It is because of lack of trust in people. Narcissism can lead narcissistic individuals into more feelings of excellence and more desire for beauty through cosmetic surgeries (Balali & Afshar kohan, 2011; Khosravi & Nazeri, 2015).

On the other hand, normal narcissism includes some sense of superiority; but at the same time, it has vulnerable self-concept, too. Since narcissistic individuals have an arrogant image of themselves, they seek to maintain their unrealistic self-esteem through different personal and intrapersonal mechanisms which makes them more vulnerable (Miller & Campbell, 2008).

It can be the reason for making them feel inferior and can lead them to desire more for changing their faces and become more beautiful. Studies show that the most common personal characteristic among cosmetic surgery applicants is meticulousness and narcissism (Ruffollo, Philips, Menard, Fye and Visberg, 2006; Sohrabi et al., 2011; Mohammad Panah and Yusefi, 2012). Ruffollo et al (2006) show that patients with body dysmorphic disorders usually have some mental illness and personality disorder comorbidity which needs to be examined by therapists.

Murgan (2003) stated that cosmetic surgery applicants, compared to normal people, stand on a lower level of mental health and healthiness. Other studies show that low level of self-esteem results in negative physical vision in individuals. Therefore, they try to compensate body dysmorphic disorder through cosmetic surgery and gain self-confidence (Mulkans and Janson, 2006; Pecorari and Gramaglia, 2008). Therefore, considering the above mentioned points, the objective of this study would be investigating the relationship between narcissism and body dysmorphic disorder in cosmetic surgery applicants.

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METHODOLOGY

This survey is a descriptive correlative study aiming at studying the relationship between narcissism and body dysmorphic disorder in cosmetic surgery applicants.

Participants

Participants of the current study were a total of 60 patients who applied for cosmetic surgery at Imam Reza Hospital in the city of Mashhad, Iran. Their scores ranged between 40 and 120 in Body Dysmorphic test.

Samples

The sample size of the study consists of 60 patients with body dysmorphic disorder who got scores from 40 to 120 in the questionnaire of body dysmorphic disorder. Participants were selected through sampling method based on Dr. Delavar's idea that just 50 samples would be acceptable for correlation equations.

In addition to the body dysmorphic score, other scales were considered:

1. Secondary school was considered as the lowest level of education
2. Sex: male and female
3. Having no physical problem
4. Having no mental disorder based on diagnostic interview

In selecting samples of the study, first a questionnaire was presented to the participants; then, 60 people who got higher scores were selected as the sample society of the study and received narcissism questionnaire.

Data analysis

The research tools in the present study were a questionnaire in four sections. The first section of questionnaire was about demographic information including age, sex, education, etc. The second section of the tools of study consisted of:

The Multidimensional Body-self Relations Questionnaire - 46 items

The Multidimensional Body-self Relations Questionnaire (MBSRQ) consists of 46 items. It is designed to measure body image and includes 6 subscales: 1. Appearance evaluation. 2. Appearance orientation. 3. Fitness evaluation. 4. Fitness orientation. 5. Overweight preoccupation. 6. Body area satisfaction.

The last version of this questionnaire was developed by Cash in 1997. Likert's Scale was run to score the questionnaire items as items were graded from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) for items 1-37, and very dissatisfied (1) to very satisfied (5) for items 38-48.

In the Persian version, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for a sample society of 217 students were reported %88-%85-%83-%79-%91-%94 for each subscale respectively.

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Correlation coefficients between scores of the samples which were obtained in two sessions with an interval of two weeks is 78% on appearance evaluation, 75% on fitness orientation, 84% on overweight preoccupation and 89% on body satisfaction which indicate the reliability of test. Also Arab Ghanei and Parvandi recorded the correlation coefficient of this scale with Rosenberg's self-esteem scale as %27 (Allah Gholilo, et al., 2011).

Personality Belief Questionnaire (PBQ)

Personality belief questionnaire was developed by Albert Alice. This questionnaire includes 50 items and its purpose would be evaluating the individual personality belief. Questionnaire was scored based on Likert's scale and ranged from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (6). In this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient is 0/90. Also in Hashemi Barzabadi's study, the content validity of the questionnaire was reported by professors of Ferdowsi University as appropriate (Besharat and Habibnejad, 2009).

To analyze the data, descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Descriptive analysis used statistic characteristic (frequency, mean value, median, mode, percent, diagram, etc.) and referential analysis used Pearson's correlation and regression.

Findings

Research hypothesis (referential statistics):

- **Main hypothesis:** There is a significant relationship between narcissism and body dysmorphic.
- **Null hypothesis:** there is not a significant relationship between narcissism and body dysmorphic.
- **Alternative hypothesis:** there is a significant relationship between narcissism and body dysmorphic

Table (1) shows descriptive indicators of all samples (subjects) such as the mean value and standard deviation in all predictor and control variables; as it is noticeable, narcissism has the lowest distribution (SD=12.24).

Table (1) descriptive indicator in predictor and criterion variables

Variables	Subjects	Standard Deviation	Mean Value
narcissism	50	12/24	18/28
Body dysmorphic	50	40/75	111/44

Table (2) correlation between predictor and criterion variables

Variables	Body dysmorphic	Dysmorphic beliefs
Narcissism	0/365**	0/512**

**p<0/01

The findings of table (2) indicate that there is a significant relationship between narcissism and both dysmorphic beliefs and body dysmorphic (P<0/01). It means that with the rise of

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predictor variables, the criterion variable increases. In fact, having more dysmorphic belief about themselves resulted in creation of more narcissism in them.

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} H_0: r_{xy}=0 \\ H_a: r_{xy}\neq 0 \end{array} \right.$$

Minor Hypothesis

There is a significant relationship between narcissism and body dysmorphic. Table (1) correlation between narcissism and body dysmorphic.

Body dysmorphic	variables
0/365**	Narcissism

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

The findings of table (6) indicate that there is a significant relationship between narcissism and body dysmorphic with a significant positive correlation of %99 confidence. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. So alternative hypothesis is confirmed i.e. there is a significant relationship between the two variables. Positive correlation between two variables indicates that an increase in one variable resulted in an increase in the amount of the other one ($P<0/001$).

CONCLUSION

The present study investigated the relationship between narcissism and body dysmorphic among 60 patients who applied for cosmetic surgery at Imam Reza Hospital in the city of Mashhad, Iran, and had scores ranging from 40 to 120 in body dysmorphic test. The findings show that the more narcissism exists in individuals, the more dysmorphic beliefs are observed. People with body dysmorphic disorder may have some progress in some aspects of life but still they suffer from their own disorders.

In terms of intensity, body dysmorphic disorder can be more serious when compared to its average level, in an extreme case of disorder, it brings more difficulty in human life and affects people's social activities. It may lead them to lose their jobs and make them stay at home most of the year (Rabighei, et al., 2010). Since cosmetic surgery is carried out to change appearance, increase satisfaction and improve self-esteem in individuals, it can result in a specific personality pattern (Kvalem, Von soest, and Roald, 2006).

Narcissistic individuals have a fragile self-esteem. They are not satisfied with their appearances, so they try cosmetic surgery to gain more satisfaction with their appearances. Narcissistic individuals want to gain respect by mastering others and by distrust in people; narcissism can lead narcissistic individuals to more feeling of excellence and more desire for beauty through cosmetic surgeries (Khosravi and Nazeri, 2015).

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Social scientists found out that people associate beauty with some admirable characteristics such as intelligence, attractiveness, and social acceptance. Cosmetic surgery is one of the big concerns for human beings and more cosmetic surgeries would be carried out to remove people's unhappiness with their appearances and to raise their sense of self-esteem (Alamdar & Ghalghe Bandi, 2003). Low self-esteem and feeling of not having enough physical and sexual attraction leads to undergoing more and more cosmetic surgeries (Besharat, 2008). Low self-esteem and negative physical vision are stressful; therefore, certain strategies are taken to overcome stress. Personality affects the strategies people take to deal with stress (Mohammad Panah, Yghobi, & Yusefi, 2013).

Ruffollo et al (2006) show that patients with body dysmorphic disorders usually have some mental illnesses and personality disorder comorbidity which need to be examined by therapists. Murgan (2003) stated that cosmetic surgery applicants, compared to normal people, stand on a lower level of mental health and healthiness. Other studies show that low level of self-esteem results in negative physical image in individuals. And they try to compensate body dysmorphic disorder through cosmetic surgery and gain self-confidence (Mulkans and Janson, 2006; Pecorari and Gramaglia, 2008).

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