

Relationship Between Cosmetics Use, Self-Esteem, and Self-Perceived Attractiveness Among Lebanese Women

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Synopsis

The objective was to assess the variables related to the usage of cosmetic products among a representative sample of the Lebanese population, including self-perception, facial attractiveness satisfaction, body image, and self-esteem. This is a cross-sectional study, conducted between January 2018 and June 2018, which enrolled 2,072 female participants using a proportionate random sample from all Lebanese Mohafazat. The results of a linear regression, taking the customary cosmetic usage score as the dependent variable, showed that an increase in the self-esteem score ($\beta = -0.21$) and being of Muslim religion compared with Christianity ($\beta = -1.39$) were significantly associated with lower cosmetic usage score. On another hand, an increase in the appearance orientation (AO) score ($\beta = 0.55$) and having a high ($\beta = 2.18$) and an intermediate ($\beta = 0.99$) socioeconomic status compared with a low one were associated with a higher cosmetic usage score respectively. According to our study, the use of cosmetic products by Lebanese women is associated with many factors such as AO, self-esteem, socioeconomic status, religion, and marital status. These results can open a window to other studies that might consider the relationship between personality traits, depression, and anxiety with the frequency of makeup use.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Physical appearance has become essential for most of the women, for various reasons, among others, to attract the attention of others, for personal satisfaction, for more self-

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confidence, or to feel desired. Study of these results can open a window to other studies that might consider the relationship between personality traits, depression, and anxiety with the frequency of makeup use.

INTRODUCTION

Many factors influence the development of a person's personality and relationships (1). Physical appearance, especially the facial features, is considered a vital factor behind physical attractiveness, which is directly correlated with the improvement of social skills (2). Thus, Nielsen and Kernaleguen showed that the attractiveness of the face, but not of the body, influences the subjective evaluation of their appearance and general physical attractiveness, as well as the social and professional satisfaction and social desirability (2). Nowadays, one of the main ways women increase their perceived attractiveness of the face is through the use of commercial cosmetics. These products allow women to conform to the standards of current feminine beauty by artificially changing the appearance of a few facial features, such as enhancing the visual impact of the eyes and lips, reducing the eyebrows, blushing the cheeks, coloring gray hair, or masking wrinkles. In addition, some studies pointed out that displaying young or slightly immature facial features (large eyes, small nose, fleshy lips, small chin, delicate jaw, etc.) increases the woman's attractiveness (3–5). Moreover, makeup products and cosmetics are initially used with the intention of protecting the skin from hazards and ensuring feelings of comfort after application. The role of cosmetic procedures is compensatory. It is a sort of a mask that enhances any feature that is lacking and that may be responsible for making the person feel embarrassed when exposed to the public eye (6). However, the main reason for putting on lipstick, foundation, and mascara is to reveal beautiful skin and make eyes and lips more attractive (7). In the purpose of proving the positive effect of makeup on physical attractiveness, Jones and Russell executed before and after use photographs and found supporting results. Their findings demonstrate that cosmetics manipulate with the facial contrast of the brows and the eyes to increase beauty factors (8).

Regarding the relationship between body image and the consumption of cosmetics, previous findings (9) have suggested that some negative aspects of body image are associated with increased use of cosmetics, to boost their image and improve the appearance of a look considered defective (10). Thus, women trying to improve various unsatisfactory aspects of their body desire a flawless self-image. On another hand, other authors showed that a positive facial image corresponds to a higher use of cosmetics (11). Therefore, greater facial image satisfaction also involved excessive use of cosmetics.

Furthermore, it has been reported that the variations of the face appearance caused by cosmetics are incorporated in many personality traits. Self-esteem, body image consciousness, and anxiety are found to be related to wearing makeup in public or in front of other people (12).

Furthermore, Leveque also studied the correlation between makeup and women's mental health (13). The use of cosmetics helped in the manifestation of emotional benefits such as having a good mood, reflecting a positive self-evaluation, and showing a significant escalation in the confidence level (14). In addition, women who put on makeup are more likely to have good jobs and higher salaries. Those who lack interest in such beauty products are women with low work positions and little earnings (15,16). Nielsen and

Kernaleguen add that facial attractiveness provides the applier satisfaction and professional success (2).

Religion is also considered as an important element of culture (17). It is also the main factor that controls the consumer behavior and the purchasing decision of different products (18). Therefore, individuals select their cosmetics according to the opinions provided by the religious state they belong to (19).

Consumer behavior is also found to be related to demographic variables. Young women between 19 and 23 years of age are more likely to use makeup than men of the same age. This usage of cosmetic supplements undergoes a significant decrease after marriage (20).

The purpose of this study was to assess the variables related to the usage of cosmetic products among a representative sample of the Lebanese population to see if the cosmetic usage is affected by factors similar to that in Western countries. This includes self-perception, facial attractiveness satisfaction, body image, and self-esteem.

METHODS

SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION

This is a cross-sectional study, conducted between January 2018 and June 2018, which enrolled 2,072 female participants using a proportionate random sample from all Lebanese Mohafazat (Beirut, Mount Lebanon, North, South, and Bekaa). Each Mohafaza is divided into Caza (stratum); two villages were randomly selected from the list of villages provided by the Central Agency of Statistics in Lebanon. Participants were randomly selected from each village. This population is appropriate for this research, as women are the primary users of cosmetics. All participants older than 15 years were eligible to participate; late teens and early twenties are years when women are still developing cosmetic habits and patterns. Excluded were the participants with self-reported psychiatric problems, mental retardation, dementia, or who refused to fill the questionnaire. Data collection was performed through personal interviews with participants by trained, study-independent personnel.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

The Psychiatric Hospital of the Cross Ethics and Research Committee, in compliance with the Hospital's Regulatory Research Protocol, approved this study protocol (HPC-018-2018). The purpose and requirement of the study was informed to each participant. Consent was obtained as written approval on the ethical consent form.

QUESTIONNAIRE

An Arabic questionnaire was used during the interview, Arabic being the native language of Lebanon. The first part assessed the sociodemographic characteristics of the participants (age, education level, marital status, socioeconomic level, and ideology). The other parts included the different scales used in this study as follows:

Questionnaire on customary cosmetic usage. The scale contains nine items, which identify the frequency of using makeup. It consists of five-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree) (21). Questions 3, 4, 5, and 6 were reversed. The customary cosmetic usage total score was calculated by summing the answers to all nine items. Higher scores would indicate higher makeup usage.

Rosenberg self-esteem scale. This 10-item scale measures both positive and negative feelings about the self to evaluate self-worth (22). The answers were rated as follows: 1 (strongly agree), 2 (agree), 3 (disagree), and 4 (strongly disagree). Five questions (3, 5, 8, 9, and 10) were reversed while doing the score calculation. Higher scores indicated higher self-esteem. In our study, the Cronbach alpha was 0.802.

Multidimensional body self-relations questionnaire (MBSRQ). Body image was measured using two subscales from the MBSRQ questionnaire: the appearance orientation (AO) questionnaire that evaluates how attractive or unattractive and how happy or unhappy the person feels with his physical appearance and the appearance evaluation (AE) questionnaire (23) to assess the time and efforts spent by the person to “look good.” The AO and AE questionnaires consist of five-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). The AO questionnaire contains 12 items, which identify the degree to which subjects consider appearance to be important. The AE questionnaire contains seven items, which identify the subjects’ attitudes regarding their appearance (23). In our study, the Cronbach alpha for AE and AO were 0.827 and 0.852, respectively.

Modified body areas satisfaction scale (BASS). The BASS, a subscale of the MBSRQ, identifies subjects’ satisfaction with various areas of their body (23). For this study, the BASS has been modified to include items on areas of the face and to eliminate areas of the body that are not included. BASS subjects are asked to indicate on a five-point, Likert-type scale (1 = very dissatisfied and 5 = very satisfied). This scale was used as a measure of facial satisfaction with and without cosmetics use. It includes nine items on overall facial satisfaction. Subjects were asked to fill out this scale twice, one time to assess satisfaction while wearing cosmetics and a second time to assess satisfaction while not wearing makeup (23). In our study, the Cronbach alpha for the first time questions while wearing cosmetics was 0.931 and for the second time while not wearing makeup was 0.922.

STATISTICAL ANALYSES

SPSS software version 23 (Statistical Package for Social Science, IBM Corp., Armonk, NY) was used to conduct data analysis. When comparing two means, we used the independent sample Student t-test. The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to assess the association between two continuous variables. A linear regression was conducted taking the customary cosmetic usage score as the dependent variable. All variables that showed a $p < 0.1$ value in the bivariate analysis were taken as independent variables in the model. Moreover, Cronbach’s alpha was recorded for reliability analysis for all the scales. A p -value less than 0.05 was considered significant.

RESULTS

The sociodemographic characteristics of the participants are summarized in Table I. The mean age of the participants was 24.84 ± 9.75 years, with the majority being single

Table I
Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Study Population

	Count
Marital status	
Single	1,415 (69.5%)
Married	523 (25.7%)
Widowed	32 (1.6%)
Divorced	67 (3.3%)
Education level	
Illiterate	35 (1.7%)
Primary	55 (2.7%)
Complementary	152 (7.6%)
Secondary	291 (14.5%)
University	1,477 (73.5%)
Socioeconomic status	
<1,000 \$	1,392 (70.9%)
1,000–2,000 \$	442 (22.5%)
>2,000 \$	130 (6.6%)
Ideology	
Christian	205 (11.1%)
Muslim	1,522 (82.0%)
Druze	95 (5.1%)
Others	33 (1.8%)
Age (years)	24.84 ± 9.75

(69.5%), having a university level of education (73.5%), with a monthly income less than 1,000 USD (70.9%) and of Muslim religion (82%).

BIVARIATE ANALYSIS

A significantly higher mean customary cosmetic usage total score was found in those with a secondary level of education (28.31) than in those with other educational levels, in high-income persons (29.35) than in those with other income levels, and in Christian women (31.44) than in those from other religions. In addition, higher AE score and AO score were significantly associated with higher total cosmetic usage scores ($r = 0.134$ and $r = 0.510$), respectively. A higher self-esteem score was significantly associated with lower cosmetic usage total score ($r = -0.047$) (Table II).

MULTIVARIABLE ANALYSIS

The results of a linear regression, taking the customary cosmetic usage score as the dependent variable, showed that a higher AO score ($\beta = 0.55$), an intermediate ($\beta = 0.99$), and a high socioeconomic status ($\beta = 2.18$) were significantly associated with higher customary cosmetic usage total scores. A higher self-esteem score ($\beta = -0.21$) and being of Muslim religion compared with Christianity ($\beta = -1.39$) were significantly associated with a lower customary cosmetic usage total score (Table III).

Table II
Bivariate Analysis Taking the Customary Cosmetic Usage Total Score as the Dependent Variable

	Cosmetic score	<i>p</i> -value
	Mean ± SD	
Marital status		
Single	27.65 ± 7.31	0.605
Married	27.85 ± 7.35	
Education level		
Illiterate	26.25 ± 9.99	0.001
Primary	25.36 ± 7.49	
Complementary	26.15 ± 7.45	
Secondary	28.31 ± 7.35	
University	25.82 ± 7.17	
Ideology		
Christian	31.44 ± 6.72	<0.001
Muslim	27.09 ± 7.41	
Druze	28.35 ± 6.49	
Others	29.68 ± 7.43	
Socioeconomic status		
<1,000 \$	27.21 ± 7.42	<0.001
1,000–2,000 \$	28.77 ± 6.97	
>2,000 \$	29.35 ± 7.84	
	Correlation coefficient	<i>p</i> -value
AE score (MBSRQ subscale)	0.134	<0.001
AO score (MBSRQ subscale)	0.510	<0.001
Rosenberg self-esteem score	–0.047	0.032

Numbers in bold indicate significant *p*-values.

DISCUSSION

The findings of our study concerning a representative sample of women among the Lebanese population clearly showed that the cosmetic products usage is lower with a high self-esteem and being Muslim. By contrast, the greater the level of AO, the higher the socioeconomic status and the higher the total consumption of makeup.

Commonly, the self-esteem of a woman is measured by the way she evaluates her appearance and accepts her self-perceived image (24). Our results showed that a high self-esteem was correlated with lower makeup use. This result might be explained by greater convenience in internal values or self-improvement/achievements than changes in external appearance. In this sense, the study by Kim and Park (25) showed that people with negative self-esteem seek happiness through impulsive purchases of cosmetics. In fact, negative self-esteem can lead to self-denial, discontent, and high dependence on the judgment of others, leading to excessive use of cosmetics for the purpose of filling a feeling of inferiority and, therefore, to please others (26). Therefore, negative self-esteem seeks pleasure through makeup and the desire to turn negative emotions such as feelings of inferiority and depression into positive emotions.

Moreover, this study’s results demonstrated that the AO was correlated with higher customary cosmetic usage, in line with previous findings (27). It has been hypothesized that women with attractive faces place greater emphasis on their appearance than do their less attractive counterparts, but only at relatively low levels of self-oriented perfectionism.

Table III
Multivariable Analysis: Linear Regression Taking the Customary Cosmetic Usage Total Score as the
Dependent Variable

	Unstandardized β	Standardized β	p -value	Confidence interval	
				Lower bound	Upper bound
Appearance orientation (AO) score	0.559	0.528	<0.001	0.520	0.598
Rosenberg self-esteem score	-0.210	-0.126	<0.001	-0.271	-0.148
Muslim religion compared with Christianity	-1.392	-0.083	<0.001	-2.003	-0.780
High socioeconomic status compared with a low one	2.189	0.073	<0.001	1.078	3.300
Intermediate socioeconomic status compared with a low one	0.990	0.055	0.003	0.328	1.651

Variables entered: Appearance evaluation (AE) score, AO score, Rosenberg self-esteem score, marital status, Socioeconomic status (SES), ideology, education level.

It is logical that the more people invest in their appearance (AO), the more likely the perception of cosmetics as a compensatory and decorative function. Individuals invested in their appearance are characterized as trying to modify or improve their appearance (by compensating for flaws and adorning/enhancing their faces) and are very conscious of their appearance reference.

Concerning the religion, our results showed that being of Muslim religion compared with Christianity was significantly associated with a lower customary cosmetic usage total score. The worldwide Muslim population is rapidly increasing in Muslim and non-Muslim countries. The growing number of Muslim consumers in the world accounts for almost 20% of the world's population (25). This is probably the main reason for the halal wave in the cosmetics industry that has led to a change in the purchasing behavior of Muslim consumers today (28). The halal market is not only targeting Islamic countries but also non-Muslim countries, and the increasing availability of such products has been an alternative to the growing global market (29). Despite the global availability of such products, the level of awareness of halal cosmetics is still low, which may explain the results obtained in our study. However, if the product is available and ready on the market, 57% and 37% of Muslims in Singapore and Indonesia said they will buy, respectively (30). However, recent generations of Muslim women focused on their education and gained high-paid job positions. This overload of money allows them to request more cosmetic products and improve their behavior as consumers. Moreover, certain reports find Muslim women wearing the hijab harder to be recognized by friends and coworkers than women with no headscarf (31). Other findings on the influence of the hijab on the perception of a woman's appearance also considered it as a modulator that affects the female facial attractiveness (32). For the purpose of reducing this visual homogeneity and beautify exposed features, Muslim females may tend to wear more makeup to express themselves as a "unique" human being. The association between makeup use and the religion is still controversial; more studies are needed to evaluate this correlation in depth.

Finally, our results showed that women belonging to a higher socioeconomic status were associated with a higher makeup use. Women with a high socioeconomic status tend to

purchase products, like makeup, from a certain luxury brand or in purpose to satisfy either their cognitive or emotional needs (33). To some, the social dimensions such as the conspicuousness, popularity, or exclusivity of the luxury brand might be of particular importance as they signal wealth, power, and status, and strengthen membership of peer groups. To others, luxury goods might serve as a financial investment or have to meet their individual standards of superior quality. Another segment's luxury brand consumption might stem from hedonistic or materialistic motives that express their individual self. In sum, luxury brands have to encompass the consumer's values to justify the purchase. Because the world of luxury brands is not homogeneous, the product category and situational characteristics play an important role. From the consumer's perspective, each luxury product can provide a certain set of values and may be more appropriate in certain situations than in others. However, other studies showed that women who belong to upper social classes and earn high salaries usually feel sentiments of superiority. In addition, having more opportunities and facilitations turn the socioeconomic level of a woman to an indicator of success with education and professional career (34,35). All of these accomplishments give each worker an impression of ability and efficiency that will generate positive self-esteem and build self-esteem without resorting to cosmetics (36). As a result, the urge to purchase and use a lot of makeup products is more intense for middle-income and lower income consumers than higher income consumers. The association between makeup use and the socioeconomic status is still controversial; more studies are needed to evaluate this correlation in depth.

LIMITATIONS

Our study has some limitations mainly related to its cross-sectional questionnaire-based design. Causal sequential relationships should be investigated in larger longitudinal studies while considering other factors that might be associated with makeup use. However, the study casts light on many important findings and is the first, to our knowledge, to address factors associated with makeup use among Lebanese women. The information obtained from the scales were self-reported and, thus, might predispose us to an information bias, such as problems understanding the questions and over/under evaluation of the symptoms. The Arabic versions of the scales used have not been validated yet. Our sample was randomly selected across Lebanese regions; however, because most women enrolled had a university level of education, our results cannot be generalized to the entire population; future studies taking these limitations into account are warranted.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, in our society, makeup has become one of the main routines in our daily lives. Physical appearance has become essential for most women, for various reasons, among others, to attract the attention of others, for personal satisfaction, for more self-confidence, or to feel desired. In addition, makeup is considered a companion for most women who allow them to have a better picture of themselves and a higher self-esteem in the different aspects of life.

According to our study, the use of cosmetic products by Lebanese women is associated with many factors such as AO, self-esteem, socioeconomic status, and religion. These

results can open a window to other studies that might consider the relationship between personality traits and the frequency of use of makeup or the depression and anxiety with the use of makeup.

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