



Aesthetic Surgery Patient Profiles: Public Hospital Example¹

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Research Article

Abstract

Aim: The aim of the study was to reveal the profiles of patients who underwent aesthetic procedures with out-of-pocket payments (public sales tariffs) between 2020 and 2023 at a public hospital in Samsun.

Methods: This descriptive study included 525 patients who underwent aesthetic surgery with out-of-pocket payments between 2020 and 2023 in a public hospital in Samsun. In the present study,

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the sociodemographic characteristics of the patients and the aesthetic procedures they underwent were analyzed.

Results: In 2020-2023, 49,638 patients were admitted to the Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgery outpatient clinic. Surgical procedures were performed on 4,960 of these patients. Of the patients who underwent surgical procedures, 525 patients underwent invasive aesthetic procedures with out-of-pocket payments out of medical necessity. The mean age of the patients was 32.31 ± 11.87 years, and 83.60% were female. 98% of patients are of Turkish origin. International patients came from Iraq, Azerbaijan and Germany. The most common aesthetic procedures performed were rhinoplasty, breast aesthetics and eyelid aesthetics. All the international patients had breast aesthetics.

Conclusion: According to the results of the present study, the majority of those who underwent aesthetic procedures were young women. The most common aesthetic procedures were rhinoplasty and breast surgery. According to these results, it may be recommended that women who undergo plastic surgery be investigated in a larger population.

Keywords: Aesthetic surgery, aesthetic tourism, public hospital, samsun

INTRODUCTION

Physical appearance is an important part of personal identity and self-perception. People's perceptions of beauty begin to take shape early in their lives (Aldosari et al., 2019). The three sociocultural factors that most influence this perception are friends, parents and social media. Individuals adopt the beauty ideals of society through these influences and compare their own appearance with these ideals (Walker et al., 2021). This process is called internalization and appearance comparison. Individuals accept society's idealized standards of beauty, strive to achieve these standards and compare themselves with others (Alcan & Çetin, 2021). This can lead to body image problems. Therefore, individuals who are not satisfied with their physical appearance are more likely to turn to plastic surgery (Gupta et al., 2020).

According to previous studies, the reasons for choosing plastic surgery include negative body image perception, body dysmorphic disorder (BDD), low self-esteem, desire to be liked, social appearance anxiety, ridicule, social rejection and social media (Çapar, 2023; Di Gesto et al., 2022; Gupta et al., 2020; Shome et al., 2020). This situation has increased dramatically, especially for women who are dissatisfied with their physical appearance. Data from the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (2023) show that women are the ones who undergo the most aesthetic

procedures worldwide. The same data show that the most common surgeries performed on women in the face and neck area are eyelid (blepharoplasty) and rhinoplasty, breast augmentation in the chest area, and liposuction in the lower body (ISAPS, 2023). One reason why women have such a high rate of aesthetic procedures is the idea that a beautiful physical appearance is the basis of being feminine (Arab et al., 2019; Mattei et al., 2015).

Aesthetic surgical procedures are performed worldwide by the out-of-pocket payment method in the absence of medical necessity. In particular, individuals who want to undergo aesthetic surgery procedures make long trips to cheaper countries (Demir, 2024). Moreover, aesthetic healthcare is an unusual physician–patient relationship in which the patient is the sole consumer and there is no third party to pay (Adams, 2013). In this respect, aesthetic health services are highly affected by macroeconomic changes and become qualitatively different from other health services (Alderman & Chung, 2013). In addition, aesthetic health services have a demand–supply effect and can be driven by commercial interests. This makes the aesthetic health sector susceptible to economic pressures like other profit-oriented sectors. Demand can vary according to service prices, and this sector aims to generate high revenues with moderate demand. Even if the price of aesthetic services is reduced, the main objective is to maximize total revenues and profits (Atiyeh et al., 2020).

Aesthetic health services constitute an area where patient preferences are at the forefront and are perceived as luxury goods. Individuals may perceive these services as buying a high-cost product; for example, they may perceive rhinoplasty surgery as a luxury, such as "buying a new nose" (Atiyeh et al., 2020; Perdikis et al., 2021). These services are among the discretionary expenditures of individuals and compete with other consumer goods and services. Patients are price sensitive and willing to choose a physician based on price, which provides bargaining power against plastic surgeons. As a result, aesthetic health services are affected by economic fluctuations (Perdikis et al., 2021). Since aesthetic health services are seen as shopping items, patients need to conduct comprehensive preliminary research before purchasing these services. This research usually includes the advantages and disadvantages of the service, the level of competence of the physician who will perform the intervention and the price of the service (Bay et al., 2024). By determining the cost as the main criterion, patients decide how to direct their resources. This price-oriented approach turns aesthetic healthcare into a competitive field and transforms the traditional

patient–physician relationship into a consumer-service provider model (Miroshnychenko et al., 2021). Therefore, patients may turn to public hospitals with competent physicians and lower costs to pay less. For this reason, the aim of this study was to reveal the profiles of patients who underwent aesthetic procedures with out-of-pocket payments (public sales tariff) between 2020 and 2023 at a public hospital in Samsun.

1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is retrospective. The study included the data of 525 patients who applied to the Aesthetic, Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Clinic of a public hospital in Samsun between 2020-2023 and underwent aesthetic surgery with out-of-pocket payment method (paid). In the study, the socio-demographic characteristics of the patients (age, gender, country of residence) and the aesthetic procedures they underwent were analyzed. For the research, permission was obtained from Samsun University Non-Interventional Clinical Research Ethics Committee with the decision number 2024/4/10 and date 14.02.2024. In addition, permission was obtained from the Chief Physician of the Hospital for the use of the data. The study data were transferred to the SPSS 26.00 program and analyzed using percentage, frequency and arithmetic mean.

2. ANALYSIS

While 5,506 patients were examined in the Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgery outpatient clinic in 2020, this number increased to 22,495 in 2023. Between 2020 and 2020, the total number of patients examined was 49,638, and the total number of inpatients (operated) was 4,960. Between 2020 and 2023, 10.58% (525) of patients who underwent surgery received out-of-pocket payments (public sales tariffs applied outside of medical necessity) (Figure 1).

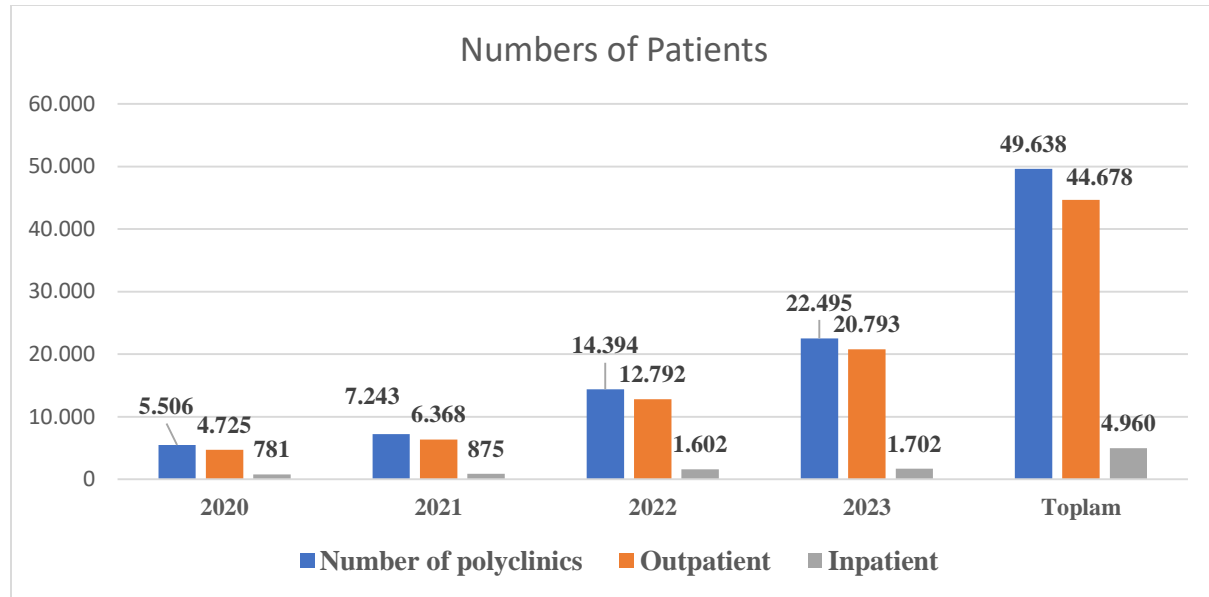


Figure 1: Number of Patients Examined between 2020 and 2023

Among the patients who underwent aesthetic surgery, 50.10% were between the ages of 18 and 29 (mean age 32.31 ± 11.87 ; min.18, max.79), and 83.60% were female. The mean length of stay was 2.89 ± 1.63 days. 98% of the patients were of Turkish origin (Table 1).

Table 1: Sociodemographic Characteristics

Variables	N	%
Age		
18-29	263	50,10
30-39	127	24,19
40-49	85	16,19
50-59	30	5,71
60 and above	20	3,81
Gender		
Men	86	16,40
Women	439	83,60
Nationality		
Turkey	515	98,00
Iraq	6	1,24
Azerbaijan	2	0,38
Germany	2	0,38
Day of Hospitalization [min-max; 1-12]		
	2,89-1,63	

A total of 525 aesthetic surgeries were performed via the out-of-pocket payment method between 2020 and 2023. Of these surgeries, 44.18% were rhinoplasties, 21.2% were breast aesthetics and 13.9% were blepharoplasty (eyelid surgeries) (Figure 2).

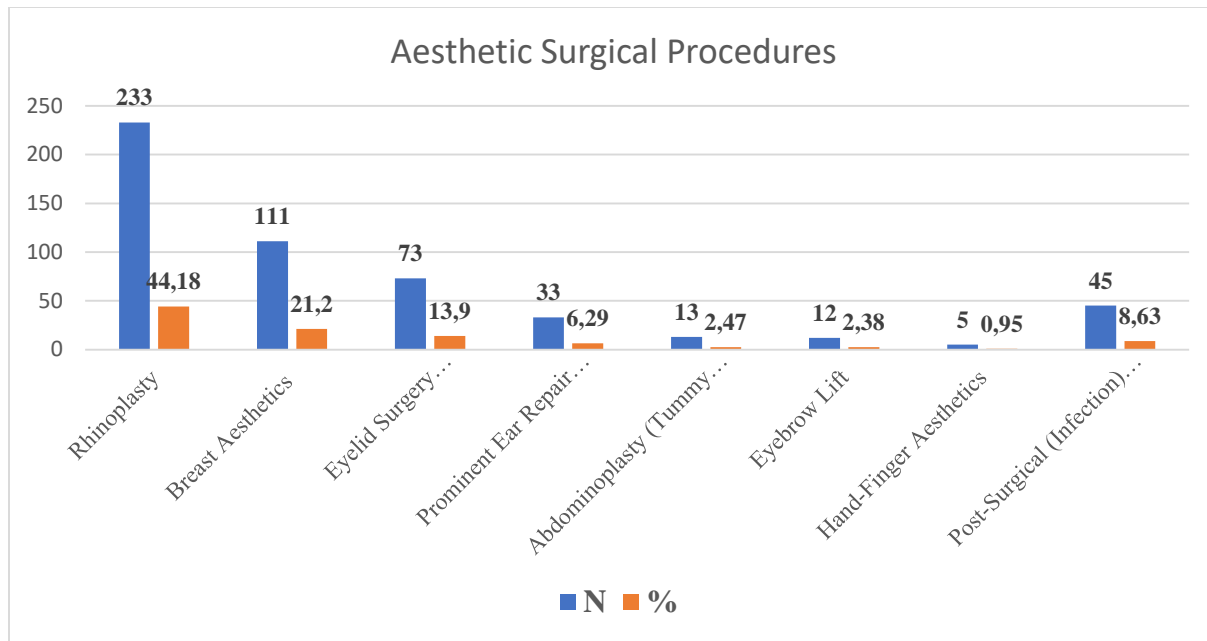


Figure 2: Aesthetic Surgeries Were Performed Between 2020 and 2023

When aesthetic procedures performed according to year were analyzed and 7 rhinoplasty surgeries were performed in 2020, 141 rhinoplasty surgeries were performed in 2023. In 2020, while there were 3 breast aesthetics, this number was 61 in 2023. While 44 blepharoplasty surgeries were performed in 2022, this number decreased to 20 in 2023 (Figure 3).

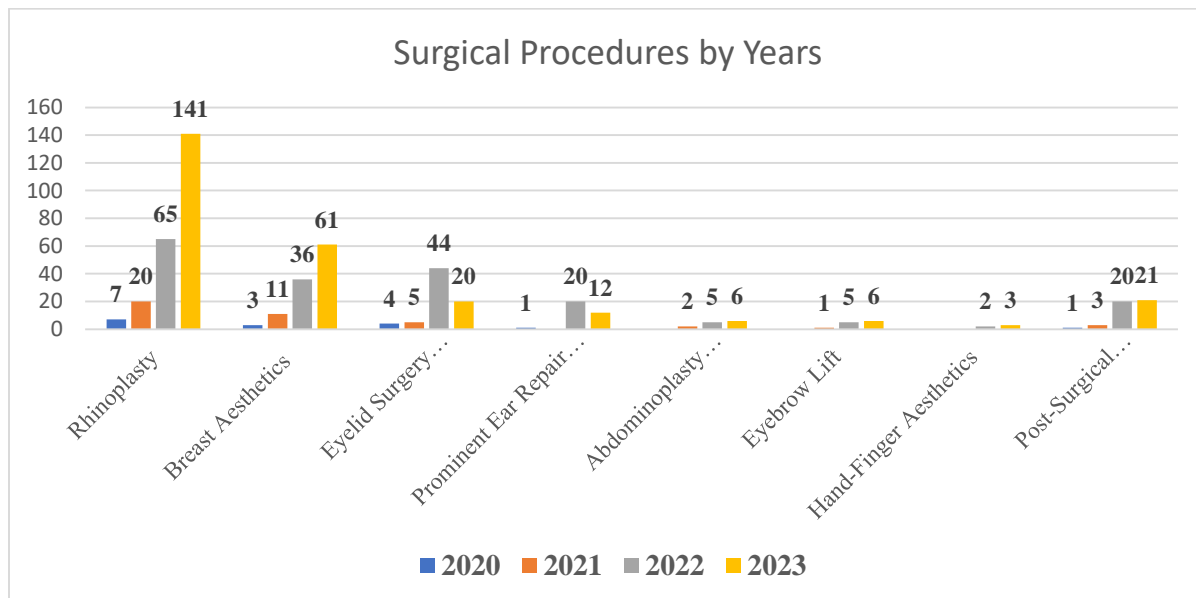


Figure 3: Aesthetic Surgeries Performed by Year

When the aesthetic surgical procedures performed according to sex were examined, women preferred rhinoplasty and breast aesthetics, while men preferred rhinoplasty and prominent ear repair (otoplasty) (Table 2).

Table 2. Aesthetic Surgical Procedures by Sex

Aesthetic Surgical Procedures	Women	Men
Rhinoplasty	187	46
Breast Aesthetics	111	
Eyelid Surgery [Blepharoplasty]	64	9
Prominent Ear Repair [Otoplasty]	17	16
Abdominoplasty [Tummy Tuck]	13	
Eyebrow Lift	10	2
Hand-Finger Aesthetics	2	3
Post-Surgical [Infection] aesthetics	41	4

3. DISCUSSION

Aesthetic surgery is intended to provide psychological and social benefits beyond improving physical appearance. These procedures can improve the psychological state of patients after surgery, increase self-confidence and improve quality of life (Barlas et al., 2015). Studies have shown that interest in aesthetic health services is associated with factors such as body dysmorphic disorders, body image problems, low self-esteem, ridicule and social exclusion or the influence of social media. These factors affect individuals' preferences for aesthetic services, and there is an important relationship between aesthetic health services and mental health (Alcan & Çetin, 2021; Demir & Özpınar, 2024; Eldaly & Mashaly, 2022; Valentine et al., 2024).

The average age of the patients who underwent aesthetic surgery was $\bar{X}=32.31\pm 11.87$ years, and 83.60% of the patients were women. In the study conducted by Çapar (2023), in which the self-esteem of women who had undergone aesthetic procedures was evaluated, the mean age of women was determined to be $\bar{X}= 32.57\pm 6.21$ years (Çapar, 2023). According to the data of the International Aesthetic Plastic Surgery Association (2023), most aesthetic procedures in the world involve women. According to the same data, the age range of women is 18-34 years (ISAPS, 2023). In a study conducted by Henry et al. (2021) with those who preferred Turkey for aesthetic procedures, it was found that all of the participants were women, and the average age was 35.1 years (Henry et al., 2021). In a study conducted by Campbell et al. (2019) on patients visiting Colombia for aesthetic procedures, 90% of the patients were female, and the age range was 22-50 years (Campbell et al., 2019). In a study by Genç et al. (2023) investigating the reasons for the

preference for aesthetic surgery by women who had aesthetic procedures, it was determined that 28% of women had aesthetic procedures due to body dissatisfaction (Genç et al., 2023). In a study conducted by Okumuş (2020), 58.6% of women thought that aesthetic procedures could be performed whenever needed (Okumuş, 2020). Taken together, these results suggest that young women prefer plastic surgery more than men. In addition, these results can be interpreted as protection, repair and improvement of physical appearance being more important for women.

According to the data of the International Aesthetic Plastic Surgery Association (2023), 832% of those who underwent aesthetic procedures between 1997 and 2018 increased by 41.3% between 2018 and 2022, reaching 14,986,982. In 2022, the most common aesthetic surgical procedures performed by women worldwide were breast augmentation and lift, liposuction, eyelid aesthetics (blepharoplasty) and abdominoplasty (tummy tuck); however, in men, liposuction, eyelid aesthetics (blepharoplasty), gynecomastia (Gynecomastia) and facial rejuvenation (Fat Grafting – Face) were performed (Campbell et al., 2019; ISAPS, 2023). According to the results, both women and men underwent rhinoplasty surgery the most. While breast reduction-twisting ranked second in women, prominent ear repair (otoplasty) ranked second in men. In the study conducted by Pereira et al. [2018], it was determined that the most common aesthetic surgery procedure was breast surgery (25%) and liposuction (21%) [(Scarano Pereira et al., 2022)]. In a study conducted by Okumuş (2020), it was determined that the most common aesthetic surgery was rhinoplasty (40.2%), followed by breast surgery (12%) and liposuction (9.4%) (Okumuş, 2020). According to the study by Campbell et al. (2019), women mostly underwent liposuction, breast surgery and Brazilian but lift, while men underwent liposuction, eyelid surgery and rhinoplasty surgery (Campbell et al., 2019). Based on these results, women generally have more aesthetic procedures both in the areas reflecting their feminine characteristics and in the visual areas, while men have more aesthetic procedures in the facial area. This situation supports the statement that women's beautiful physical appearance is the basis of being feminine.

Another result of the study was that the number of aesthetic surgeries performed, especially after surgical infection, was 8.53%. The five countries with the most aesthetic procedures in the world are the United States, Brazil, Japan, Mexico and Turkey. In addition, Türkiye(28.7%) ranks 4th after Mexico (33.8%), Colombia (30.9%)and Thailand (29.0%) among the most preferred countries by foreign patients who want to have aesthetic procedures (Demir, 2024; Temizkan & Temizkan, 2020). Studies have shown that the greatest complication observed after aesthetic

procedures is infection, and after these infections, an additional fee of \$1500-3000 exits the patients' pockets. The same studies indicate that this rate is greater in patients returning to their countries after aesthetic procedures are performed in Türkiye, Mexico, Colombia and the Dominican Republic (Gilardi et al., 2023; Hummel et al., 2023; Klein et al., 2016; Rafeh et al., 2022; Thacoor et al., 2019). Based on these results, Turkey is one of the most preferred destinations in the world in terms of aesthetic tourism and plastic surgery. In fact, Turkey has been among the top ten destinations in the world in terms of medical tourism in the last 20 years (Bostan, 2016; Çapar, 2019; Demir et al., 2020; Farrukh et al., 2022). For this reason, it is very important to prevent infections by developing new measures for sterilization and disinfection according to the studies in the literature and the results of this study in terms of both the country and hospital image.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Psychological, demographic, social and cultural factors play important roles in increasing interest in plastic surgery. Mass media such as fashion and beauty magazines, social media, television, advertisements and the film industry create idealized body images and influence society through these images. The desire to reach the images created by the media in this way leads people to surgical or nonsurgical aesthetic procedures. The fact that procedures such as breast surgery, liposuction and rhinoplasty stand out among popular aesthetic operations shows the strong influence of the media on the perception of the ideal body. As a result of this perception, women in particular turn to these surgeries, and this situation is an additional economic burden. Especially in the private sector, aesthetic procedures are performed at high prices, leading individuals to different searches. For this reason, individuals prefer public hospitals where aesthetic procedures are performed. In public hospitals, these procedures are carried out under the supervision of the Ministry of Health over the public sales tariff. Moreover, considering the recent economic situation in Turkey, this situation can be seen as an opportunity for public hospitals with sufficient numbers of specialists and health professionals. Moreover, Türkiye, which stands out for its low cost in medical tourism, can come to the forefront with more of these procedures in public hospitals and adequate promotion and marketing activities. Despite these findings, additional academic studies on the desire to be liked and social appearance anxiety created in young individuals, especially through social media, should be conducted, and awareness training for young members of society should be organized according to these results.

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