

Adopting a comprehensive approach to minimize the impact of social media on dental esthetics

Saurabh RamBihariLal Shrivastava, Prateek Sudhakar Bobhate¹, Atul Andelkar, Alka Dafare

Department of Community Medicine, Datta Meghe Medical College, Off-Campus Centre of Datta Meghe Institute of Higher Education and Research, Nagpur, Maharashtra, ¹Department of Community Medicine, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Vijaypur, Jammu and Kashmir, India

Abstract

Dental esthetics is crucial for self-confidence, interactions with people, and well-being. In the current era, social media plays a defining role in influencing perceptions about dental esthetics, which leads to a rise in the demand for cosmetic dental procedures. However, the constant exposure to flawless smiles on social media tends to make individuals more self-aware and more critical of their dental esthetics. Due to the overhyped and the unnecessary advertisement and marketing of esthetic dental procedures across different platforms of social media, there has been a significant increase in the number of unsafe or unregulated dental procedures. Acknowledging the rampant rise in esthetic dental procedures, the psychological consequences, and the involved ethical considerations, there is a significant need to encourage better practices. In conclusion, social media plays a crucial role in defining preferences for dental esthetic procedures among the general population. However, the need of the hour is to plan and adopt a comprehensive approach to encourage healthy and ethical practices and take targeted steps to discourage false information and harmful practices.

Keywords: Dental esthetics; dental tourism; social media

INTRODUCTION

Dental esthetics is crucial for self-confidence, interactions with people, and well-being.^[1] In-fact, a well-aligned and bright smile gives a good impression and is vital for maintaining oral hygiene and functions.^[1] In the current era, social media plays a defining role in influencing perceptions about dental esthetics, which leads to a rise in the demand for cosmetic dental procedures.^[2,3] The findings of a cross-sectional study done among 504 participants reported that almost 30% of the respondents were motivated by social media to undergo esthetic dental procedures, while a post by the dental clinic or dentists

on social media proved to be the most influential one.^[2] Similarly, the findings of another questionnaire-based study done among dental professionals, it was revealed that 90% believed that a rise in the demand for esthetic procedures is primarily because of social media.^[3]

SOCIAL MEDIA AND DENTAL ESTHETIC TRENDS

Social media can influence dental esthetics in multiple ways, like endorsement by celebrities and social media influencers who frequently showcase their aligned smiles, which often drives the general population or their followers to undergo such dental procedures.^[2,3] These celebrities are often roped in to advocate various esthetic procedures (like aligners, teeth whitening, etc.), and this augments visibility and even impacts the decision of consumers.^[3] Peer influence, wherein upon seeing their friends undergo dental transformation and post images/reels on social

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Saurabh RamBihariLal Shrivastava,
Department of Community Medicine, Datta Meghe Medical College, Off-Campus Centre of Datta Meghe Institute of Higher Education and Research, Hingna Road, Wanadongri, Nagpur, Maharashtra, India.
E-mail: drshrishri2008@gmail.com

Date of submission : 29.06.2025

Review completed : 17.07.2025

Date of acceptance : 23.07.2025

Published : 05.09.2025

Access this article online

Quick Response Code:



Website:
<https://journals.lww.com/jcde>

DOI:
10.4103/JCDE.JCDE_469_25

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work non-commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

For reprints contact: WKHLRPMedknow_reprints@wolterskluwer.com

How to cite this article: Shrivastava SR, Bobhate PS, Andelkar A, Dafare A. Adopting a comprehensive approach to minimize the impact of social media on dental esthetics. J Conserv Dent Endod 2025;28:943-5.

media apps, often compels them to follow their footsteps.^[4] In many campaigns on social media, dentists and patients often advertise significant transformation before and after procedures or support drives, which makes people curious about such cosmetic procedures.^[3] Moreover, many viral trends on these platforms, like teeth whitening hacks, motivate more people to seek dental treatments.^[4] Further, due to the constant exposure to so-called ideal smiles on social media, there has been a greater sense of self-consciousness about dental appearance.^[5]

The emergence of tele-dentistry or virtual consultation via social media platforms with experts has made these esthetic procedures more accessible.^[6] In continuation, social media has opened the option of availing dental esthetic treatments abroad and has been an important source for encouraging dental tourism.^[7] Further, through the use of different beauty filters or artificial intelligence-based applications, unattainable dental esthetics can be created, which pushes individuals to seek cosmetic dentistry.^[8] However, we must consider the negative side of these applications as well, like on many platforms, risky do-it-yourself treatments are being run (like household products for whitening), which might interest consumers but then be a cause of concern.^[9] In continuation, social media has encouraged demands for multiple dental cosmetic products (viz. home whitening kits, aligners, etc.) over any other form of professional treatment.^[2] Furthermore, these platforms can be utilized to exaggerate the effectiveness of specific dental procedures, which might result in unrealistic expectations about outcomes.^[10]

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON DENTAL ESTHETICS

As mentioned above, the constant exposure to flawless smiles on social media tends to make individuals more self-aware and more critical of their dental esthetics.^[4] In the process to attain optimal beauty standards, including perfect-white and aligned teeth, people often develop low self-esteem, low confidence, and body image concerns.^[3,4] It is not an unusual occurrence that people feel anxious about posting their pictures or videos due to concerns regarding their tooth appearance.^[2,3] There is a possibility that many people are pushed toward undergoing unnecessary cosmetic dental procedures due to trends in social media.^[6] In-fact, some people might even become obsessed to repeatedly undergo cosmetic enhancements, which is not good in the long run.^[2,3] Between peers, this might introduce unnecessary competitive behavior and even frustration (if dental esthetic procedure does not deliver unrealistic results).^[4] Finally, harsh and negative online comments about dental appearance can significantly contribute to the development of anxiety, depression, or even withdrawal from social interactions as people feel insecure.^[11]

IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Due to the overhyped and the unnecessary advertisement and marketing of esthetic dental procedures across different platforms of social media, there has been a significant increase in the number of unsafe or unregulated dental procedures (viz. teeth whitening strategies, at-home aligners, etc.).^[12] The absence of supervision from professionals in such treatments is a major concern for long-term dental health risks.^[12] The next major concern is that influencers and nondental professionals often promote unverified products (like baking soda for teeth whitening), and such advertisements give false expectations about treatment outcomes, leading to patient dissatisfaction.^[13]

Due to the influence of social media, the focus has shifted to esthetic concerns instead of oral health/preventive dental care (viz. prevention of dental caries, gum health, etc.), and this is a grave cause of concern.^[2,10] Many influencers support dental services and products without disclosing their vested interests or associated risks, which is a kind of ethical violation.^[10,14] Further, many individuals travel abroad for less expensive dental esthetic procedures, while in the process, they ignore safety standards and posttreatment care.^[7] Finally, as these procedures are often expensive, people from lower socioeconomic status are generally not able to afford such treatments and eventually resort to unsafe alternatives.^[15]

PROPOSED PUBLIC HEALTH RECOMMENDATIONS

Acknowledging the rampant rise in esthetic dental procedures, the psychological consequences, and the involved ethical considerations, there is a significant need to encourage better practices.^[2,7,10,12,14-22] The primary intervention is to improve the awareness of the general public on evidence-based dental care through the implementation of educational campaigns to inform the masses about the importance of oral health (viz. regular dental checkups, proper brushing techniques, maintenance of gum health, etc.) beyond esthetics.^[2,16] These awareness activities must be supplemented with the regulation of the advertisement of dental esthetic procedures over social media platforms.^[12] This can be ensured by establishing strict guidelines by governments and dental associations for the promotion of dental products and procedures, and also by making it mandatory to disclose sponsorships and scientific evidence in advertisements.^[14,17] Further, health agencies must collaborate with social media platforms to remove hazardous content regarding self-administered dental treatments and promote body positivity in social media campaigns.^[12,18]

There is an indispensable need to improve access to affordable and safe treatment for underserved populations, and this will essentially require expansion of insurance policies to cover necessary esthetic procedures that contribute to improving oral health.^[15,19] Licensed dentists can be encouraged to create educational social media content with the purpose of countering misleading information and discouraging unsafe dental practices in domiciliary settings.^[20] In continuation, it is crucial that dental influencers and professionals strictly adhere to ethical marketing practices whenever they promote esthetic procedures, including prioritizing patient health over profit-driven esthetic treatments.^[10,14] There arises the need to train dental professionals on ethical esthetic dentistry practices during their training period in training schools and motivating them to practice esthetic dentistry responsibly.^[10]

Governments must establish the clear guidelines for dental tourism and also develop international collaborations to ensure the maintenance of uniform safety standards, especially in popular destinations.^[7] Moreover, there is a significant need to introduce digital health literacy programs where people can be sensitized on critically evaluating dental health information online and empower them to differentiate between safe and harmful practices.^[21] To reduce the psychological impacts, mental health assistance must be offered to individuals dealing with self-esteem issues, especially those related to dental esthetics.^[11] Finally, there is a definite need to encourage the conduct of studies to assess the impact of social media on dental care preferences and mental health, and use the obtained findings for policymaking and public health interventions.^[2,3,22]

CONCLUSION

Social media plays a crucial role in defining preferences for dental esthetic procedures among the general population. However, the need of the hour is to plan and adopt a comprehensive approach to encourage healthy and ethical practices and take targeted steps to discourage false information and harmful practices.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

REFERENCES

1. Stojilković M, Gušić I, Berić J, Prodanović D, Pecikozić N, Veljović T, *et al.* Evaluating the influence of dental aesthetics on psychosocial well-being and self-esteem among students of the University of Novi Sad, Serbia: A cross-sectional study. *BMC Oral Health* 2024;24:277.
2. Freire Y, Gómez Sánchez M, Sánchez Ituarte J, Frías Senande M, Díaz-Flores García V, Suárez A. Social media impact on students' decision-making regarding aesthetic dental treatments based on cross-sectional survey data. *Sci Rep* 2024;14:21626.
3. Abbasi MS, Lal A, Das G, Salman F, Akram A, Ahmed AR, *et al.* Impact of social media on aesthetic dentistry: General practitioners' perspectives. *Healthcare (Basel)* 2022;10:2055.
4. Shahzad HB, Awais F, Kazmi F, Arshad AI, Manzar S, Rashid S, *et al.* Dental aesthetic related popularity and peer pressure, a survey of adolescents in Pakistan. *Int J Adolesc Med Health* 2023;35:283-90.
5. Čalušić Šarac M, Jakovac M. the influence of social network content on the perception of smiles-a randomized controlled trial. *Dent J (Basel)* 2022;10:168.
6. Alghonaim Y, Arafat A, Aldeghaither S, Alsugheir S, Aldekhayel S. Social media impact on aesthetic procedures among females in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. *Cureus* 2019;11:e6008.
7. Baik KM, Anbar G, Alshaikh A, Banjar A. Effect of social media on patient's perception of dental aesthetics in Saudi Arabia. *Int J Dent* 2022;2022:4794497.
8. Obwegeser D, Timofte R, Mayer C, Eliades T, Bornstein MM, Schätzle MA, *et al.* Using artificial intelligence to determine the influence of dental aesthetics on facial attractiveness in comparison to other facial modifications. *Eur J Orthod* 2022;44:445-51.
9. Sivaramakrishnan G, AbdulAmeer F, Faisal F, Mansoor Z, Hasan S, Ebrahim S, *et al.* Use of social media to view and post dentistry-related information in Bahrain: A cross-sectional study. *Healthc Inform Res* 2023;29:31-9.
10. Rostamzadeh M, Rahimi F. Aesthetic dentistry and ethics: A systematic review of marketing practices and overtreatment in cosmetic dental procedures. *BMC Med Ethics* 2025;26:12.
11. Winkler CH, Bjelopavlovic M, Lehmann KM, Petrowski K, Irmscher L, Berth H. Impact of dental anxiety on dental care routine and oral-health-related quality of life in a German adult population-a cross-sectional study. *J Clin Med* 2023;12:5291.
12. Salim NA, Jubair F, Hassona YM, Izriqi S, Al-Fuqaha'a D. Esthetic dentistry on twitter: Benefits and dangers. *Int J Dent* 2021;2021:5077886.
13. Wells MW, Furnas HJ. Commentary on: Patient preferences and perceptions concerning aesthetic providers and social media. *Aesthet Surg J* 2023;43:710-2.
14. Simplicio AH. Social media and dentistry: Ethical and legal aspects. *Dental Press J Orthod* 2019;24:80-9.
15. MacDougall H. Dental disparities among low-income American adults: A social work perspective. *Health Soc Work* 2016;41:208-10.
16. Barranca-Enríquez A, Romo-González T. Your health is in your mouth: A comprehensive view to promote general wellness. *Front Oral Health* 2022;3:971223.
17. World Dental Federation FDI. Advertising in dentistry: Adopted by the FDI general assembly: August 2017, Madrid, Spain. *Int Dent J* 2018;68:6-7.
18. Farrokhi F, Ghorbani Z, Farrokhi F, Namdari M, Salavatian S. Social media as a tool for oral health promotion: A systematic review. *PLoS One* 2023;18:e0296102.
19. Diop M, Kanouté A, Diouf M, Ndiaye AD, Lo CM, Faye D, *et al.* The role of health insurance in the coverage of oral health care in Senegal. *J Public Health Afr* 2018;9:772.
20. Al-Khalifa KS, Al-Swuailem AS, AISheikh R, Muazen YY, Al-Khunein YA, Halawany H, *et al.* The use of social media for professional purposes among dentists in Saudi Arabia. *BMC Oral Health* 2021;21:26.
21. Sharma S, Mohanty V, Balappanavar AY, Chahar P, Rijhwani K. Role of digital media in promoting oral health: A systematic review. *Cureus* 2022;14:e28893.
22. Acosta JM, Detsomboonrat P, Pisarnurakit PP, Urwannachotima N. The use of social media on enhancing dental care and practice among dental professionals: Cross-sectional survey study. *JMIR Form Res* 2025;9:e66121.