

# The perception of older adults regarding Aesthetic procedures

## A percepção dos idosos em relação a procedimentos estéticos

### La percepción de los adultos mayores respecto a los procedimientos estéticos

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# REVISIA

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#### RESUMO

**Introdução:** O preconceito em relação ao envelhecimento ainda está presente na sociedade contemporânea. Compreender como os idosos percebem os procedimentos estéticos é essencial para o desenvolvimento de estratégias que aprimorem a autoestima e a qualidade de vida nessa população. **Objetivo:** Examinar a aceitação de procedimentos estéticos durante o processo de envelhecimento e explorar a relação entre a aceitação da cirurgia plástica e a satisfação corporal. **Métodos:** Foi realizado um estudo de campo exploratório utilizando fontes bibliográficas e entrevistas. A coleta de dados ocorreu remotamente por meio de um questionário acompanhado de um termo de consentimento livre e esclarecido digital. Os participantes eram adultos com 60 anos ou mais que haviam se submetido a procedimentos ou cirurgias estéticas. Foram realizadas análises qualitativas e quantitativas. **Resultados:** Vinte idosos responderam ao questionário. A maioria dos participantes relatou melhora na autoestima e na satisfação com a aparência após a realização de procedimentos estéticos. **Discussão:** Os resultados indicam que os padrões de beleza são construídos socialmente e fortemente influenciados pelas representações da mídia. Os idosos frequentemente enfrentam julgamentos sociais e familiares ao buscarem intervenções estéticas, apesar de relatarem benefícios psicológicos significativos. **Conclusão:** Compreender as expectativas e preocupações dos idosos em relação aos procedimentos estéticos permite que os profissionais de saúde adotem abordagens mais empáticas e individualizadas, promovendo experiências mais seguras e positivas.

**Descritores:** Idosos, Eletroestimulação, Treinamento resistido, Limiar de dor e Cargas externas

#### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Prejudice toward aging remains present in contemporary society. Understanding how older adults perceive aesthetic procedures is essential for developing strategies that enhance self-esteem and quality of life in this population. **Objective:** To examine the acceptance of aesthetic procedures during the aging process and explore the relationship between plastic surgery acceptance and body satisfaction. **Methods:** An exploratory field study was conducted using bibliographic sources and interviews. Data collection occurred remotely through a questionnaire accompanied by a digital informed consent form. Participants were adults aged  $\geq 60$  years who had undergone aesthetic procedures or surgeries. Qualitative and quantitative analyses were performed. **Results:** Twenty older adults completed the questionnaire. Most participants reported improved self-esteem and satisfaction with their appearance after undergoing aesthetic procedures. **Discussion:** Findings indicate that beauty standards are socially constructed and strongly influenced by media representations. Older adults often face social and familial judgment when seeking aesthetic interventions, despite reporting significant psychological benefits. **Conclusion:** Understanding the expectations and concerns of older adults regarding aesthetic procedures enables health professionals to adopt more empathetic and individualized approaches, promoting safer and more positive experiences.

**Descriptors:** Elderly, Electro-stimulation, Resistance training, Pain threshold and External loads

#### RESUMEN

**Introducción:** El prejuicio hacia el envejecimiento persiste en la sociedad actual. Comprender cómo los adultos mayores perciben los procedimientos estéticos es fundamental para desarrollar estrategias que mejoren la autoestima y la calidad de vida en esta población. **Objetivo:** Examinar la aceptación de los procedimientos estéticos durante el proceso de envejecimiento y explorar la relación entre la aceptación de la cirugía plástica y la satisfacción corporal. **Métodos:** Se realizó un estudio de campo exploratorio utilizando fuentes bibliográficas y entrevistas. La recopilación de datos se realizó de forma remota mediante un cuestionario acompañado de un formulario de consentimiento informado digital. Los participantes fueron adultos de 60 años o más que se habían sometido a procedimientos o cirurgias estéticas. Se realizaron análisis cualitativos y cuantitativos. **Resultados:** Veinte adultos mayores completaron el cuestionario. La mayoría de los participantes reportaron una mejora en la autoestima y la satisfacción con su apariencia después de someterse a procedimientos estéticos. **Discusión:** Los hallazgos indican que los estándares de belleza son construcciones sociales y están fuertemente influenciados por las representaciones mediáticas. Los adultos mayores a menudo enfrentan juicios sociales y familiares al buscar intervenciones estéticas, a pesar de reportar beneficios psicológicos significativos. **Conclusión:** Comprender las expectativas y preocupaciones de los adultos mayores con respecto a los procedimientos estéticos permite a los profesionales de la salud adoptar enfoques más empáticos e individualizados, promoviendo experiencias más seguras y positivas.

**Descritores:** Ancianos, electroestimulación, entrenamiento de resistencia, umbral del dolor y cargas externas.

ORIGINAL

## Introduction

Aging is an active and progressive process characterized by physical, physiological, and psychological changes that may affect an individual's ability to adapt to their environment. Self-esteem plays a crucial role in this stage of life, as it reflects how individuals perceive and value themselves. Plastic surgery, therefore, extends beyond aesthetic outcomes and contributes to psychological well-being, requiring a strong and respectful relationship between health professionals and patients due to the expectations involved (1).

Social interactions and media—both traditional and digital—shape and reinforce ideals of beauty, influencing individuals' perceptions of their bodies. Although beauty standards differ between men and women, acceptance of aesthetic plastic surgery does not vary significantly by sex; rather, individuals tend to be cautious due to perceived surgical risks (2).

According to the Brazilian Society of Plastic Surgery, aesthetic plastic surgery aims to modify normal body structures to improve appearance and self-esteem. Data from the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery indicate that Brazil ranks second worldwide in the number of aesthetic surgical procedures, behind only the United States (3).

Despite the natural physical changes associated with aging, societal misconceptions often lead to prejudice against older adults. Understanding their perceptions of aesthetic procedures is essential for promoting self-esteem, quality of life, and safe decision-making regarding surgical and minimally invasive interventions (4).

Lack of family and social support is a major challenge for older adults seeking aesthetic procedures, followed by financial limitations. Many older adults use retirement income or lifelong savings to pursue procedures that enhance self-image and well-being. Common procedures in this age group include liposuction, breast augmentation, blepharoplasty, rhinoplasty, and abdominoplasty (5). Individuals seeking aesthetic plastic surgery often present low self-esteem and dissatisfaction with specific body parts, along with emotional sensitivity. These psychological factors highlight the importance of preoperative psychological assessment and emotional support (3).

Self-esteem tends to decline in older adults due to changes in appearance, functional limitations, personal losses, and retirement. These factors increase vulnerability to anxiety and depression. Aesthetic procedures may help mitigate visible signs of aging and improve self-esteem (3).

Although aesthetic procedures can significantly improve quality of life, adherence among older adults remains low due to fear of surgical risks, financial concerns, lack of information, or insufficient family support.

Population aging is reshaping global health and social structures. Quality of life in older adulthood is multidimensional, encompassing physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual, and social aspects (5).

Aesthetic surgery has been shown to improve quality of life across demographic groups, with benefits particularly evident in self-esteem and personal satisfaction (6). This study seeks to answer: How do older adults perceive aesthetic procedures during the aging process? The objective is to understand their perceptions, feelings

about aging, experiences of support or discrimination, and the impact of these procedures on self-esteem and quality of life.

## Methods

This field study used a questionnaire with 12 items, distributed remotely via Google Forms. The instrument included closed-ended (yes/no) and open-ended questions to explore participants' perceptions and feelings. A digital informed consent form was provided. Qualitative and quantitative analyses were performed. Participants were aged  $\geq 60$  years and had undergone aesthetic procedures or surgeries (5).

A non-probabilistic sampling strategy was used. Participants were randomly selected from the database of a plastic surgery clinic in the Federal District, which authorized the study. Data collection occurred from April to June (7). Sample size was defined using the data saturation technique, which was reached after 20 participants, as additional responses did not contribute new information (8).

## Results

A comprehensive questionnaire was used to obtain an in-depth understanding of participants' perceptions. The main motivation for undergoing aesthetic procedures was improved self-esteem. Among participants, 74% reported significant improvement, and 90% reported increased satisfaction with their appearance.

Examples of participant statements included:

- "I was very happy after recovery; my self-esteem went way up."
- "Exactly what I wanted."
- "I can love myself again."
- "I loved the smooth forehead effect from the Botox."
- "The rejuvenation was extraordinary in my life."

Half of the participants expressed interest in undergoing additional procedures. All participants reported feeling more secure about their self-image after the intervention. Regarding social perception, 65% reported not being judged by family or society, while 35% experienced judgment, mainly from family members.

One participant stated: *"After my bariatric surgery, I wanted to remove excess skin and get Botox, but my children don't support me because of my age."*

Another participant shared: *"Rhinoplasty has been a dream for years, but I don't know if I can still do it."*

Women represented 79% of the sample, while men accounted for 21%.

## Discussion

The findings indicate that aesthetic procedures are perceived positively by older adults, who report improvements in self-image and self-esteem. However, societal prejudice persists, often rooted in misconceptions about aging as a period of decline rather than a natural developmental stage (7).

Media representations reinforce unrealistic beauty standards, suggesting that older adults should not pursue changes in appearance. In Brazil, beauty ideals are strongly influenced by cultural norms associated with youthfulness and physical attractiveness (9).

Beauty standards are socially constructed and shaped by media messages, although individuals vary in how they internalize these influences (6).

Older adults often face stereotypes suggesting they should limit themselves to domestic tasks and avoid concerns related to appearance. These beliefs negatively affect quality of life (10).

Despite these challenges, older adults demonstrate autonomy and resilience in pursuing personal satisfaction. However, social pressure and age-related prejudice may lead to psychological distress, including depression. Successful aging encompasses physical health, emotional well-being, and personal fulfillment (11).

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that concern for appearance and well-being persists throughout life. Social and familial reactions significantly influence older adults' decisions regarding aesthetic procedures. Many hesitate to invest in themselves due to fear of judgment.

Although limited by its small sample size and single-clinic setting, the study highlights the need for further research.

Understanding older adults' expectations and concerns enables health professionals to provide empathetic, individualized care. Many older adults wait until later in life – often after achieving financial independence – to undergo aesthetic procedures.

Health professionals must approach patients with empathy, respect, and ethical responsibility, avoiding unnecessary procedures and acknowledging the psychological dimensions of aesthetic interventions.

Prejudice and discrimination against older adults often go unnoticed but can deeply affect self-esteem and quality of life. Promoting a more inclusive and respectful view of aging is essential.

Aesthetic procedures – whether surgical or minimally invasive – can positively impact self-esteem and quality of life, reinforcing that beauty and well-being are not limited by age.

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