

The Effect of Surgeon's Gender on the Psychological Comfort of Saudi Ladies Attending Plastic Surgery Clinic in a Saudi Governmental Hospital

Nojoud Ahmad Omaish¹, Sadem Saad Alsharif¹, Ahad Bugis¹, Wesam Al Majed², Mohammed Rustom^{2*}

¹Intern Doctor, Dar Al-Uloom University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

²Consultant Plastic Surgeon,

Plastic and Reconstructive Department, Prince Mohammed Bin Abdulaziz Hospital, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Our Saudi community is known to be a very conservative community, especially for females. This is likely attributed to the strong cultural traditions and beliefs which have strict Islamic bound backgrounds. For this reason, Saudi females are believed to find it easier to communicate and deal with their gender equivalent throughout their daily routine. In our study, whether this credence is conceptually and practically implied in the medical practice is debatable.

Method: A prospective pilot questionnaire-based cohort study.

Results: Among the 200 patients that were recruited in our study, it was concluded that about 48% stated that they would feel more comfortable visiting a female plastic surgeon. While about 25% chose male gender, 26% felt neutral toward either gender.

Conclusion: We assumed in our study that the preference of ladies attending clinics generally would be towards female clinicians, for the reason that we live in conservative and strongly religious society like Saudi Arabia. However, the debate would be that these factors are opposed with an

overwhelming effect of the social media, which could change the scale of the equation.

Keywords: Psychological Comfort, Gender Preference, Cultural Influence.

*Correspondence to:

Dr. Mohammed Rustom,
Consultant Plastic Surgeon,
Plastic and Reconstructive Department,
Prince Mohammed Bin Abdulaziz Hospital,
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Article History:

Received: 11-06-2019, Revised: 04-07-2019, Accepted: 30-07-2019

Access this article online

Website: www.ijmrp.com	Quick Response code 
DOI: 10.21276/ijmrp.2019.5.4.026	

INTRODUCTION

Our Saudi community is known to be a very conservative community, especially for females. This is likely attributed to the strongly rooted cultural traditions and beliefs which have strict Islamic bound backgrounds. For this reason, Saudi females are believed to find it easier to communicate and deal with their gender equivalent throughout their daily routine.

In our study, whether this belief is conceptually and practically implied in the medical practice is debatable. Few factors are needed to be taken into account when looking at such an issue.

1. Saudi Arabia is a large country, which though has 100% Muslim population, their rationality is greatly affected by region-specific traditions and values, moreover, each region has extremist & liberal thinkers, but most of the areas are dominated by modest thinkers. For example, in X area women are conditioned to work in a purely feminine society i.e. woman are not accepted to work in places where they have to deal and communicate with men. However, in Y

area women are encouraged and well supported finding jobs and getting actively involved in a productive working environment comparative to their men fellows.

2. Choosing the treating physician can sometimes be a complex step, the competency and reputation of the doctor are two major factors but in plastic surgery, the story may be a little different especially in its aesthetic aspect. The necessity of performing cosmetic procedures is not there, making such procedures very optional which throw its shadow on whether picking a man to examine patient's private areas and discuss sensitive makeover techniques quite embarrassing to many patients.
3. In recent social media statistics, Saudis are reported to be the second in the world in the volume of Snapchat users, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook are as well intensely used. This will definitely consolidate the effect of globalization and country to country values transmission. This in return will

hypothetically have some influence on weakening the gender-oriented determination of the choice of the physicians.

According to Asnat Groutz and colleagues did their research studying the gender preferences of women regarding their choice of a breast surgeon. A study which concluded that about a third of women to prefer a female breast surgeon for their breast examination. In contrast, when it comes to breast operations, preference for a female surgeon is less pronounced, with the professional skills of the surgeons becoming the predominant consideration.¹ Based on Eva A. Huisand and colleagues they studied The Impact of a Plastic Surgeon's Gender on Patient Choice. Their study has shown that Most female patients interested in aesthetic surgery have no gender preference. Of those who do, nearly all requested a female plastic surgeon. More important than a plastic surgeon's gender, however, is a plastic surgeon's reputation.² In another study of Shamrani H*, which investigated women's gender preferences for their obstetrician-gynecologist. It was shown that Women visiting the gynecology and obstetrics clinics of King Abdulaziz University Hospital prefer a female gynecologist-obstetrician.³

Does Physician Gender Affect Satisfaction of Men and Women Visiting the Emergency Department? A study was done by Kathryn Pitkin Derosé and her colleagues it was determined that Female patients trusted female physicians more than male physicians and rated female physicians more positively on the amount of time spent. Male patients rated male and female physicians similarly on all dimensions of care.⁴

METHODS AND MATERIALS

We chose a Study design of Qualitative prospective questionnaire-based cohort study. And the research was conducted in Governmental hospital in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (PMAH) during Nov-2018 till March-2019. Our sample target 200 Female patients attending the plastic clinic in PMAH. The patient has been asked to fill the Questionnaire forms (designed) Description-(a copy of the questionnaire will be sent as a separate attachment) and the participation was entirely voluntary.

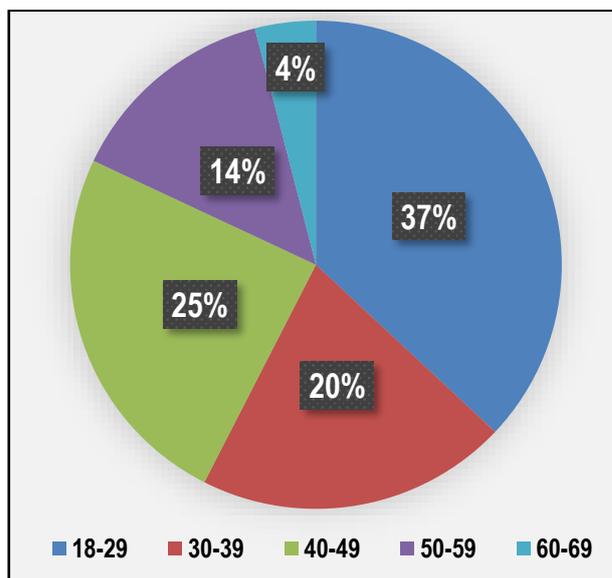


Fig 1: Age Distribution

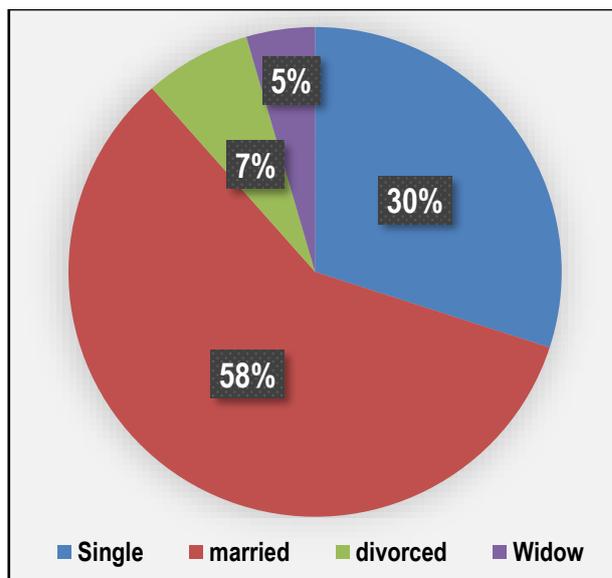


Fig 2: Marital Status

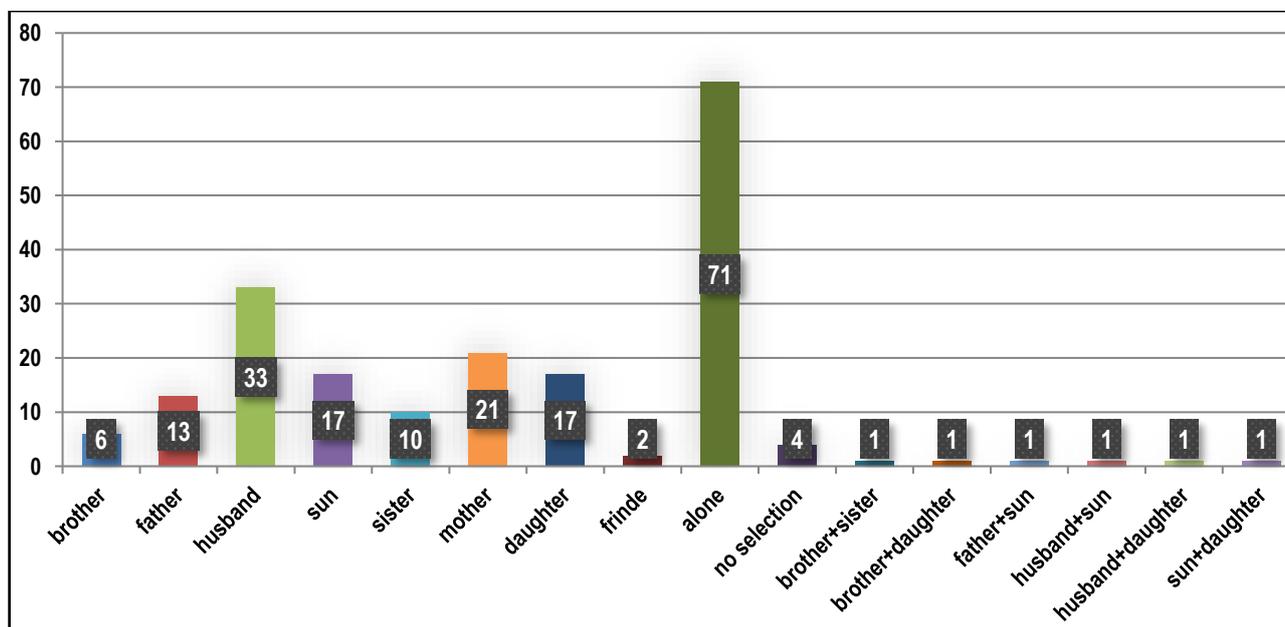


Fig 3: Accompanying Person

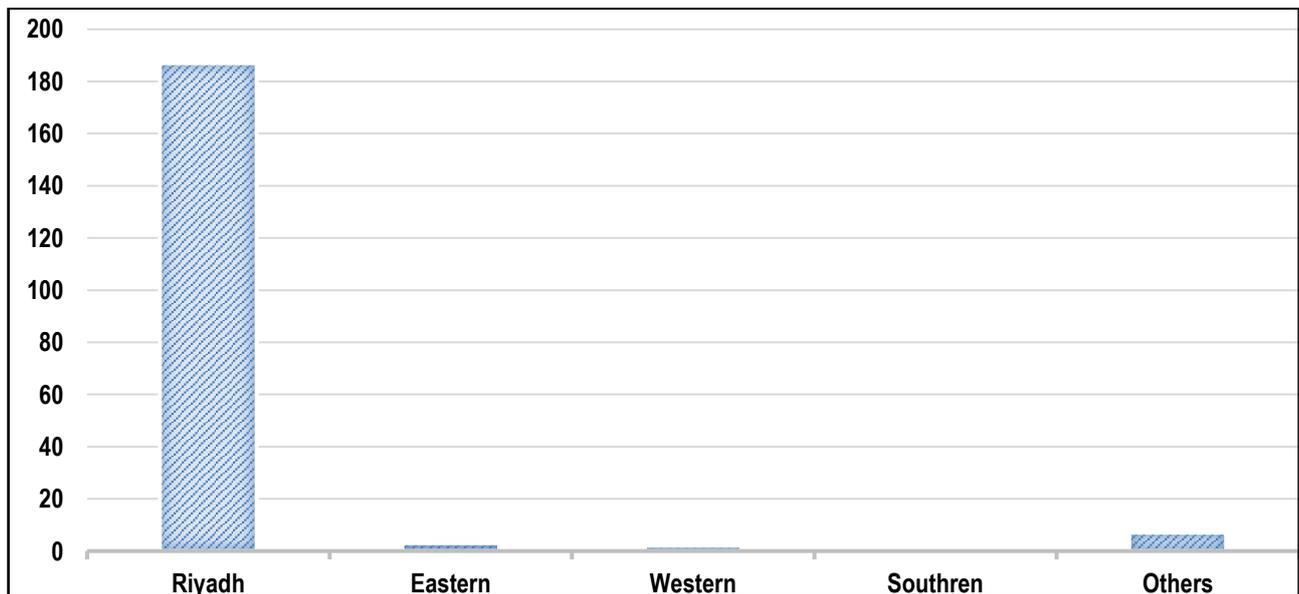


Fig 5: Geographic distribution of the population

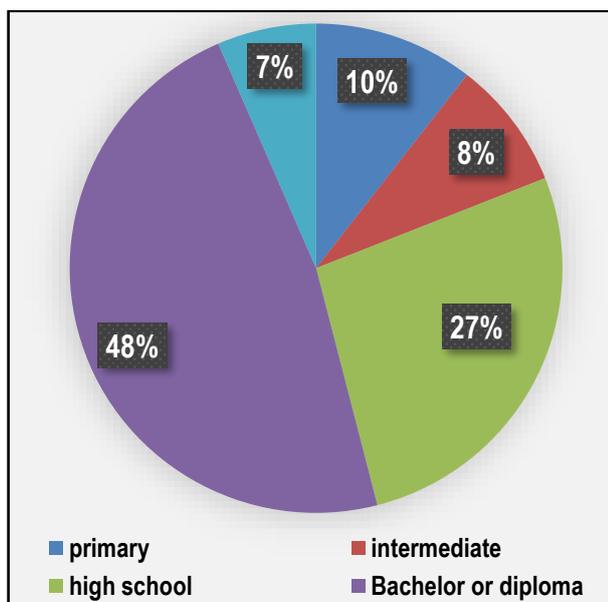


Fig 4: Educational Level

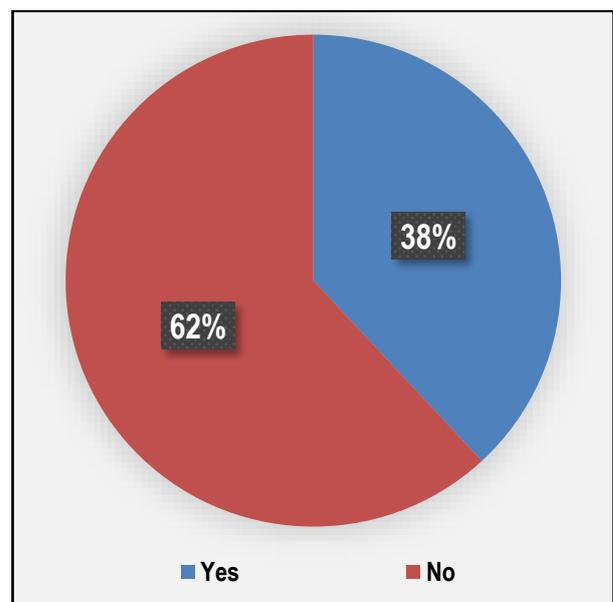


Fig 7: Previous Experience: selection of specific doctors

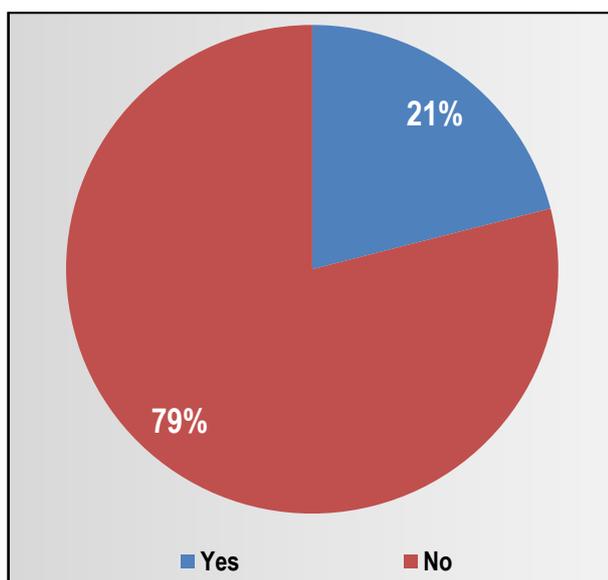


Fig 6: Previous Experience: Previous visits

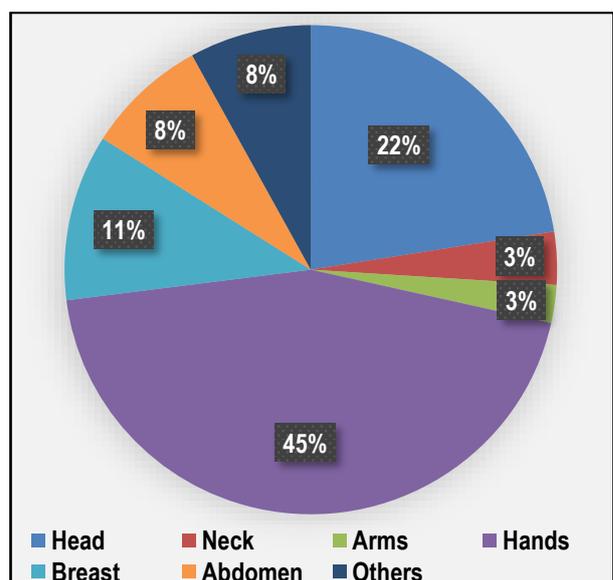


Fig 8: Body Part Involved

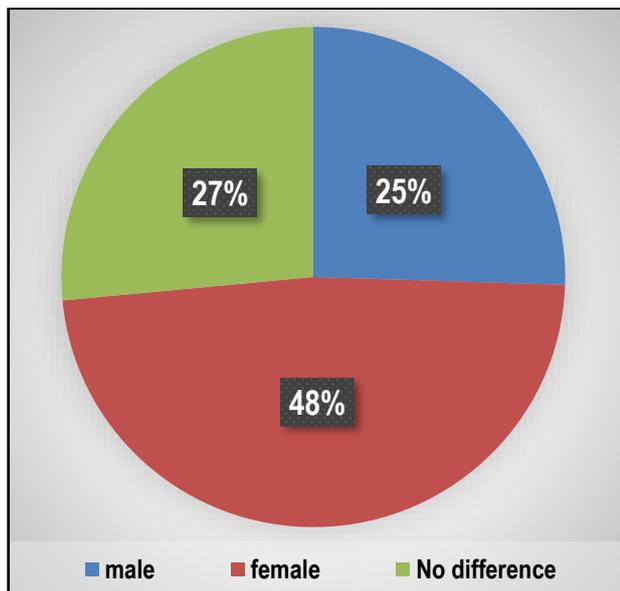


Fig 9: Gender preference

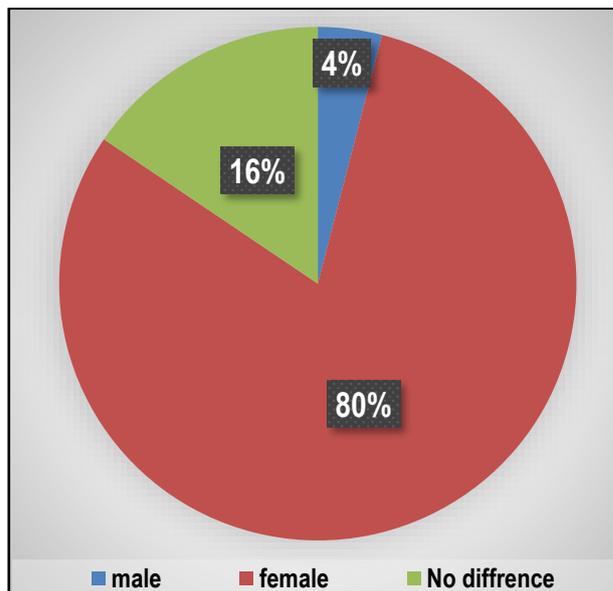


Fig 11: Sensitive issues

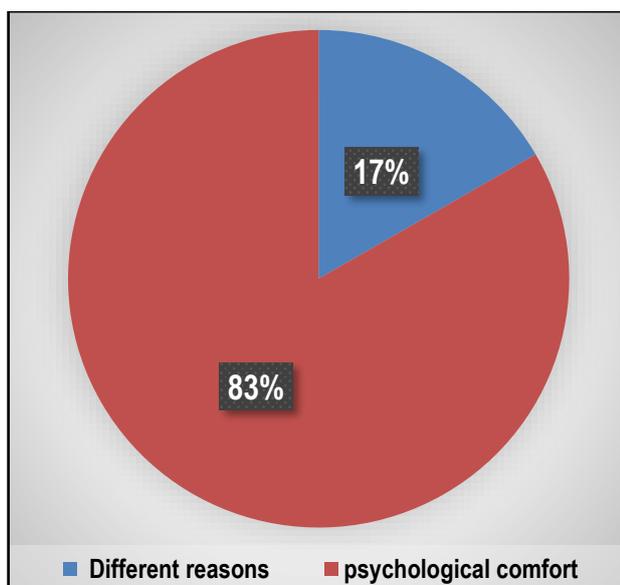


Fig 10 (A): Gender preference: Reasons behind The tendency toward female surgeon

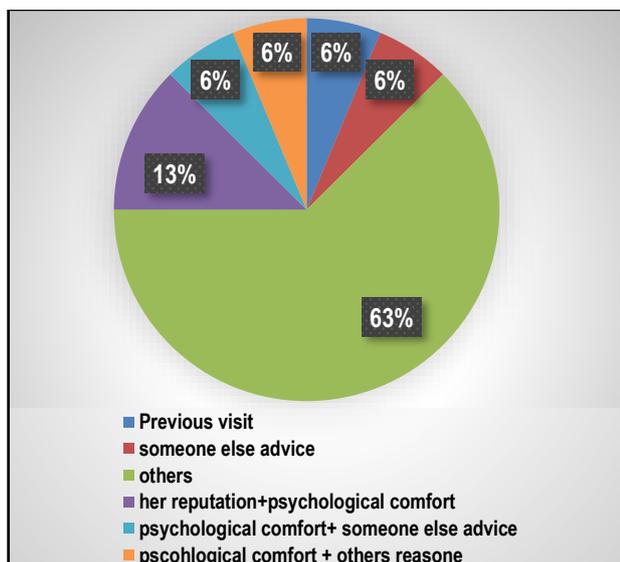


Fig 10 (B): Gender preference: Reasons behind The tendency toward female surgeon

RESULTS

1. Age: We recruited 200 patients, the majority of them falls in the age group between 18-29. (Figure 1)
2. Marital Status: We have studied the marital status of our patients assuming it could have a major influence on their decision, the majority of our patients (about 58%) are married. (Figure 2)
3. Accompany: Who the patient comes with is assumed to be one of the most influencing factors as it affects the freedom of selecting the physician's gender as well as showing a relaxed approach with him/her. (Figure 3)
4. Educational Level: Majority (about 47%) of them are reasonably educated holding a bachelor or diploma degree. This defiantly carries a high weight in term of study reliability and reproducibility. (Figure 4)
5. For the Geographic Distribution: we found that Saudi Arabia is a very large country with a considerable degree of variations in ethnicity and culture; this is largely affected by the geographic distribution of the population. As we have carried out our study in a hospital located in the central region serving population dominantly originate from this area leaving our sample not truly representative of the whole Saudi population. (Figure 5)
6. Previous Experience :
 - a. Previous visits to the plastic clinic in PMAH: 21% of the patients have previous exposure to PMAH Plastic clinic and 79% did not (Figure 6)
 - b. Among the 21% of patients who have been exposed to the Plastic clinic, 38% have made their choice by selecting specific doctors before first visit.(Figure 7).
7. Body Part Involved : We assumed that one of the major determinants of the level of comfort of the patients is what part of their body is going to be exposed or examined by the surgeon and whether this has an influence on their choice of the gender selection in the treating surgeon. (Figure 8)
8. Gender preference :
 - a. Among the 200 patients that were recruited in our study, it was concluded that about 48% stated that they would feel more comfortable visiting a female plastic surgeon. While

about 25% chose male surgeon, 26% felt neutral toward either gender. (Figure 9).

- b. When analyzing reasons behind The tendency toward female surgeon selection we found out that most of them did so for psychological reasons being more comfortable having a female surgeon [Fig 10 (A)]
 - c. It is a striking finding that the surgeon's reputations and previous experience with plastic surgery contributes little to the gender selection, while most of the patients did not state clear reasons on why they made such choices; we believe this may be because they can be very conservative in expressing their true reasons. [Figure 10 (B)]
9. Sensitive issues: It was not unexpected that sensitive topics related to women health are easier explained and discussed with their physician of similar gender and plastic surgery was not an exception based on the finding of our study shown in the above diagram. (Figure 11)

DISCUSSION

In a conservative and strongly religious society like the ones in Saudi Arabia, we assume that the preference of ladies attending medical clinics would generally be towards female clinicians. However, there are many factors which may influence such speculation. Some of them are related to variation in culture and family values from region to another. Such an influence of the cultural and social backgrounds is clearly seen, particularly in areas where female special body parts are involved in the process of examination and/or treatment. A similar study done by Groutz A and colleagues who studied the role of gender in patient preference in Breast surgical care¹ published in 2016, among the 500 patients' who responded to their study only 32% preferred to undergo breast examination by a female breast surgeon and only 14% preferred to undergo breast surgery by female breast surgeon. The majority of the participants had no gender preference in both variables which is the opposite result in our study. Another important factor is the sensitivity of the field of plastic surgery, particularly in its aesthetic aspect, as competency factor may override the gender when it comes to selecting your doctor. Our study has concluded female gender in plastic surgeons is the preferred gender for female patients by 48% of our study population stating that they prefer to see a female plastic surgeon and only 25% opted to rather choose male and the remaining 26% felt neutral towards either gender. We did not find a similar study that evaluated the area of patients' comfort toward their physician in plastic surgery territory, however a comparable study done by Shamrani H³ concluded a similar result stating that women visiting obstetrics and gynecology clinic in their hospital prefer a female physician. Although in their study the reputation of the physician was one of the important determinants, it played very little role in our study, which is rather a striking finding to us. Similarly, a study done by Kathryn Pitkin Derose and her colleagues who demonstrated the gender satisfaction in Emergency Department settings⁴ published in 2001, has concluded a similar results in which Women reported being significantly more satisfied with female physicians than with male physicians. Female patients trusted female physicians more ($P = .003$) than male physicians and rated female physicians more positively on the amount of time spent ($P = .01$), on concern shown ($P = .04$), and overall ($P = .03$). Differences in ratings by

female patients of male and female physicians in terms of friendliness ($P = .13$), respect shown ($P = .74$), and the extent to which the physician made them feel comfortable ($P = .10$) did not differ significantly. Male patients rated male and female physicians similarly on all dimensions of care (overall, $P = .74$; friendliness, $P = .75$; time spent, $P = .30$; concern shown, $P = .62$; making them feel comfortable, $P = .75$; respect shown, $P = .13$; trust, $P = .92$).

All those studies clearly emphasized on the importance of gender preference as a strong factor that determine to a large extent patients' satisfaction toward the process of their treatment, particularly, the females.

The intensity of using social media (Snapchat, Instagram, twitter, etc) in Saudi Arabia is significantly remarkable, Saudi Arabia scores among the top in the world in the participation in Snapchat in one record – as an example. These factors will definitely have an impact on patients' expectation and perception when attending plastic surgery clinic, on this ground, it was difficult to hypothesize whether ladies in our society prefer male or female doctors. Hence we believe our study will be of a tremendous impact on the planning and employment strategies of many healthcare facilities.

CONCLUSION

Most female patients in PMAH prefer female plastic surgeon; this should raise concern of the need to increase the opportunity of female trainees to field of plastic program to meet such demands.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to give the due credit to those who participated in this study, especially the nurses, the colleagues and the administration of the hospital for their valuable cooperation.

REFERENCES

1. Groutz A, Amir H et al. Do women prefer a female breast surgeon?. Israel journal of health policy research. 2016 Dec;5(1):35.
2. Huis in't Veld EA, Canales FL, Furnas HJ. The impact of a plastic surgeon's gender on patient choice. Aesthetic surgery journal. 2016 Dec 2;37(4):466-71.
3. Shamrani H. A Cross-sectional Survey of Women's Provider Gender Preferences for Gynecology and Obstetrics Care at King Abdulaziz University Hospital. J Women's Health Care. 2016;5(347):2167-0420.
4. Derose KP, Hays RD et al. Does physician gender affect satisfaction of men and women visiting the emergency department?. Journal of General Internal Medicine. 2001 Apr 1;16(4):218-26.

Source of Support: Nil.

Conflict of Interest: None Declared.

Copyright: © the author(s) and publisher. IJMRP is an official publication of Ibn Sina Academy of Medieval Medicine & Sciences, registered in 2001 under Indian Trusts Act, 1882. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial License, which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Cite this article as: Nojoud Ahmad Omaish, Sadem Saad Alsharif, Ahad Bugis, Wesam Al Majed, Mohammed Rustom. The Effect of Surgeon's Gender on the Psychological Comfort of Saudi Ladies Attending Plastic Surgery Clinic in a Saudi Governmental Hospital. Int J Med Res Prof. 2019 July; 5(4):114-18. DOI:10.21276/ijmrp.2019.5.4.026