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Cosmetic Surgery as a Strategy for Preventing Marital Infidelity: A Paradigm Model

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The methodological paragraph states that the study was conducted “within an interpretive-constructivist paradigm” while simultaneously adopting “the systematic approach of Strauss and Corbin.” This epistemological combination requires stronger justification because the systematic Strauss–Corbin approach and constructivist grounded theory are associated with somewhat different epistemological assumptions and analytic emphases. The authors should explain why an interpretive-constructivist paradigm was selected alongside the Strauss and Corbin coding framework, how the researchers understood the status of categories—as discovered from data or co-constructed through researcher-participant interaction—and how this philosophical positioning affected interviewing, coding, memo writing, and theory development. Without such clarification, the methodological foundation appears theoretically hybrid rather than deliberately integrated.

In the methods section, the sentence “The study population consisted of married women residing in Isfahan who had undergone at least one cosmetic surgery motivated by marital-relationship concerns” is insufficiently operationalized. The manuscript should specify exactly how eligibility based on “marital-relationship concerns” was established. For example, was this criterion determined through a screening question, referral by previous participants, self-identification during recruitment,

or preliminary interview? The authors should also report explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria, such as minimum duration of marriage, time elapsed since surgery, type of surgery considered eligible, current marital status, history of confirmed or suspected infidelity, psychiatric conditions affecting body image, and whether minimally invasive interventions such as fillers were classified as "surgery." This clarification is essential for assessing sample coherence.

The trustworthiness paragraph should more clearly distinguish the procedures corresponding to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The sentence reporting "member checking," "87% reliability," "weekly reviews," and "a comprehensive audit trail" lists several techniques but does not explain how each criterion was established. The authors should specify what participants reviewed during member checking—raw transcripts, codes, category interpretations, or the final paradigm model—and how many participants participated in this process. Similarly, transferability should be supported through thick description of participant and contextual characteristics rather than treated as automatically achieved through other validity procedures.

The report of "87% intercoder reliability" requires methodological specification. The manuscript should identify how this percentage was calculated, including the unit of analysis, number or proportion of transcripts double-coded, coding stage to which agreement was applied, formula used, and procedure for resolving disagreements. Simple percent agreement may overestimate reliability because it does not correct for chance agreement. If Cohen's kappa or another coefficient was not calculated, the authors should explain why percentage agreement was considered appropriate for the interpretive grounded theory design. More importantly, the manuscript should clarify whether intercoder agreement was used as a supportive quality-control procedure rather than as evidence that qualitative interpretation is fully objective.

The participant-characteristics paragraph contains incomplete distributions. The text reports that "interventions ranged from minimally invasive procedures… (n = 3), to localized surgical procedures… (n = 3), and major invasive surgeries… (n = 5)," which accounts for only 11 of the 16 participants. Likewise, the occupational description of husbands reports "self-employment and commercial occupations (n = 6) to salaried and academic occupations (n = 3 explicitly reported)," leaving the remainder unspecified. All demographic and procedural categories should sum to the total sample or the authors should explicitly state that participants could have undergone multiple procedures and explain overlapping categories. A concise participant-characteristics table would improve transparency and allow readers to evaluate sample heterogeneity.

The causal-condition findings would benefit from stronger grounding in participant data. For example, the category "Encountering the husband's visual craving, wandering gaze, and humiliating comparisons" is described in considerable interpretive detail, yet no verbatim participant quotations are presented. A grounded theory manuscript should demonstrate the connection between conceptual categories and empirical material. The authors should provide carefully selected quotations for each major category or at least each principal dimension, labeled with participant identifiers and relevant contextual information. Quotations should illustrate rather than merely repeat the analytic interpretation and should demonstrate variation across participants.

Several category labels are rhetorically powerful but may exceed what is warranted by qualitative evidence unless closely tied to participants' language. Examples include "aggressive body management," "visual craving," "commodification of the self," "declaration of conflict within the household economy," "psychological weapon," and "oppressive beauty-centered discourse." The authors should clarify which terms are in vivo expressions and which represent researcher-generated theoretical concepts. Where labels are interpretive, they should be justified analytically and, where necessary, moderated to avoid introducing evaluative assumptions that could overshadow participants' meanings. Particularly strong terms should be supported by multiple quotations demonstrating that the conceptual interpretation reflects recurrent patterns rather than isolated narratives.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

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The sampling description requires greater procedural detail. The manuscript states that participants were selected "initially through purposive sampling and subsequently, as analysis progressed, through theoretical sampling assisted by the snowball technique." The distinction between theoretical sampling and snowball recruitment should be clarified because these procedures serve different methodological purposes. Theoretical sampling should be driven by emerging categories and gaps in the developing theory, whereas snowball sampling primarily facilitates participant access. The authors should identify specific examples of how preliminary analysis changed subsequent recruitment decisions—for instance, whether women with financial independence, different surgical histories, or contrasting spousal responses were deliberately sought to elaborate emerging categories. This would provide stronger evidence that genuine theoretical sampling occurred.

The statement that "New codes ceased to emerge after the fourteenth interview, and saturation was confirmed through two additional interviews" presents saturation primarily as code repetition. In grounded theory, theoretical saturation should involve more than the absence of new codes; it should indicate that major categories are sufficiently developed in terms of properties, dimensions, conditions, relationships, and variation. The authors should describe how saturation was assessed for each of the six components of the paradigm model and indicate whether the final two interviews confirmed category density, relationships among categories, and the explanatory adequacy of the core category. A saturation table or concise audit description could substantially strengthen methodological transparency.

The manuscript should provide substantially more information about the semi-structured interview procedure. The methods section currently identifies "in-depth semi-structured interviews" but does not report the interview guide, core domains, average interview duration, interview setting, number of interviews conducted per participant, whether interviews were face-to-face or online, or whether follow-up interviews occurred. Given the sensitivity of marital infidelity, sexuality, spousal criticism, and financial conflict, the authors should also describe how privacy was ensured during interviews and provide representative interview questions, such as those exploring the decision to undergo surgery, perceived marital threats, reactions of husbands, social influences, and post-surgical experiences.

Reflexivity requires explicit treatment. Because this study addresses highly gendered and morally sensitive issues—including infidelity, attractiveness, objectification, marital power, and women's bodies—the researchers' own assumptions could meaningfully shape questioning, coding, and interpretation. The manuscript should include a reflexivity statement specifying the interviewers' disciplinary backgrounds, gender where methodologically relevant, prior assumptions about cosmetic surgery and marital infidelity, relationships with participants, and procedures used to identify and bracket or critically interrogate preconceptions. The current reference to analytic memos is valuable, but memo writing alone does not demonstrate adequate reflexive practice.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor's decision: Accepted.
Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.

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