

Selfie and Narcissism in Young Adults

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Abstract

Selfie, a commonly observed behaviour, is symbol of virtual identity. Similarly, narcissism as described by grandiose view of oneself, seeking approval and admiration on social media is also frequent. The purpose of this study is exploring selfie taking behaviour and narcissism among young adults. A total 132 subjects were considered for study through an online questionnaire which included demographic variables, selfie taking behaviour and NPI-16 (Narcissistic Personality Inventory -16). The results showed majority of the subjects $N = 76$ (57.5%) had high narcissism ($NPI \geq 7$). Age group 15 to 25 years ($p = 0.0200$), males, subjects who stayed in city, post graduates or graduate qualification, and married subjects had high narcissism. Using smart phone use more than 5 years ($p = 0.00942$), taking 5 to 10 selfies per day with ($p = 0.00331$), posting selfie for personal memory ($p = 0.03268$), selfie on WhatsApp messenger ($p = 0.03268$) and taking selfie with person alone and selfie taken on specific occasions ($p = 0.01122$), had high narcissism. The conclusion of this study is selfie and narcissism are closely linked among young adults and a matter of psychological wellbeing during personality development.

Keywords: selfie, narcissism, Narcissistic Personality Inventory-16, young adults

Abstrak

Selfie adalah sebuah perilaku yang dapat diobservasi yang merupakan simbol dari identitas virtual. Demikian juga halnya dengan narsisisme yang digambarkan sebagai mengagumi diri sendiri, mencari persetujuan dan kekaguman dari orang, sering ditemui di sosia media. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengeksplorasi perilaku *selfie* dan narsisisme di kalangan dewasa muda. Total dari subjek penelitian ini adalah sebanyak 132 orang yang diperoleh dari kuesioner online, yang meliputi variabel demografis, perilaku *selfie* dan NPI-16 (Narcissistic Personality Inventory -16). Hasil menunjukkan mayoritas dari subjek, sebanyak $N = 76$ (57.5%) memiliki narsisisme yang tinggi ($NPI \geq 7$). Kelompok usia 15 sampai 25 tahun, laki-laki, tinggal di kota, pendidikan sarjana atau pasca sarjana dan menikah, memiliki narsisisme yang tinggi. Menggunakan telepon genggam lebih dari 5 tahun ($p = 0.00942$), melakukan *selfie* 5 sampai 10 kali perhari ($p = 0.03268$), memposting foto hasil *selfie* sebagai kenang-kenangan untuk diri sendiri ($p = 0.03268$), *selfie* di *WhatsApp messenger* ($p = 0.03268$) dan *selfie* secara sendirian serta selfie yang diambil dalam acara tertentu ($p = 0.01122$), memiliki narsisisme yang tinggi. Kesimpulan dari penelitian ini adalah *selfie* dan narsisisme sangat erat kaitannya diantara dewasa muda dan menjadi masalah berkaitan dengan *psychological wellbeing* selama perkembangan kepribadian.

Kata kunci: *selfie*, narsisme, *Narcissistic Personality Inventory-16*, dewasa muda

Introduction

In today's era of social media, clicking a selfie is one most commonly observed behavior. Whether we travel or walk down a street or in theatre or at a social function, we see every other individual engrossed in extending the smart phone making self-pictures. This is a trend of seeing oneself in the world. Posting it on social media makes it a symbol of identity. A virtual identity where people are eager to invite appreciation or affirmation to their selfie. Taking, posting and sharing selfies have become quotidian routines for millions of people and has rapidly permeated the global culture of connectivity. Van Dijck (2013). Selfies have rapidly become one of the most important avenues for the satisfaction of basic social needs through social networks (SNSs), namely the need for self-presentation. Nadkarni & Hofmann (2012). In November 2013 'Selfie' was named the international word of the year by Oxford Dictionaries. Oxford Dictionary defines selfies as, "A photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically with a smart phone or webcam and uploaded to a social media website" Oxford Dictionary (2013). Indeed, the word's frequency increased in usage by 17,000% between the years 2012 and 2013 (Bennet S, 2014). It starts with holding the mobile phone in a single hand or a selfie stick, tilting it or trying to make the best possible angle along with most different expressions, perceptions about one self is built and then posting it on a specific social networking site for gathering more likes and comments as well as approval of the identity in the photograph. Youth use selfies to show their identity and personal relationships, as well as to obtain positive responses from friends and acquaintances. Kim & Chock (2016). Few studies have examined reciprocal relationships selfie-related behaviors and both self-objectification and appearance concerns and state that self-objectification predicted increases in subsequent selfie-related behaviors. Wang Y., et al. (2021). Enhancement of emotional well-being and increase in positive affect on posting selfie for a specific purpose e.g.- make others happy have also been observed by Chen, Yu et al., (2016).

Back in time, history reveals a Greek myth says that Narcissus had a craving to get closer to his reflection which disappears and dissolves as soon as he approaches too near, he loses himself, his original human nature and turns to a vegetative life form. Narcissus had indifference, insensitivity, pride, inability to empathize and eventually his insatiable passion for himself. The difference between modern narcissism and what the myth of Narcissus tells us, is that the present narcissist primarily or solely doesn't enjoy watching himself in the mirror or in photographs but showing him/herself to others. Milivojević, T (2014). Considering narcissism as a personality trait or disorder namely narcissistic personality disorder (NPD), an Axis II disorder in Diagnostic and Statistical Manual: fifth edition (DSM-V), is de Narcissistic Personality Inventory-16 defined by self-promotion, vanity, grandiose sense of self-importance, power fantasies and superficial relationships. Narcissism is a pervasive pattern of grandiosity or grandeur (in fantasy or behavior), a need for admiration, and lack of empathy, beginning by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts. Pearson C and Zaheer S (2015). Also, narcissism is characterized, in part, by a grandiose self-presentation that is motivated by the need to regulate self-esteem. Morf & Rhodewalt (2001). Narcissism also means extreme self-centeredness, a need for approval by others and feeling a sense of entitlement. Narcissists are more likely to use the main functions of social networking sites (SNS) eg. status update, picture adding, uploads their attractive photos, etc as they are drawn to the control over self-presentation. Wang, Jackson, Zhang and Su (2012). Over last few years multiple studies report that selfie related behavior is closely related to narcissism and narcissism being a strong predictor of selfie posting behaviour and that narcissistic individuals are more likely and more frequently wish to post selfies. (Biolcati & Passini, 2018; Halpern et al., Kim et al. and McCain et al., 2016; Sorokowski et al., Fox & Rooney and Weiser, 2015; Kim & Chock, 2017; Malik N. I., et al., 2020 and Salafia, C., & Rimzhim, A, 2020). These studies showed that selfie posting behavior increased one's narcissism or vice versa.

This study was done with purpose of exploring the relation of selfie taking behavior and narcissism among young adults. For this study, narcissism is considered as self-enhancement of self-perception; as a dynamic self-regulatory behavior of getting approval and external affirmation and as a grandiose self-concept. Morf & Rhodewalt (2001). We tried to see through various aspects of a selfie taking behavior like related demographics, how it affects narcissism in a person and whether both are related or not.

Method

A total 132 subjects between ages 15 to 55 years were considered for study through an online questionnaire through email and social networking over a period of 6 months (August 2019 to February 2020). An informed consent was taken prior to the questionnaire about the confidentiality. Subjects who agreed for the consent, involve in selfie practices and regularly using internet was considered for the study. Other age groups, incomplete questionnaire and non-consent subjects were excluded.

Questionnaire included the following

1. Demographic profile
This included age, sex, city of residence, occupation, marital status and family income per month. Socio economic status was derived from modified Kuppuswamy's classification as per norms for India as upper, middle and lower socio economic class. Kuppuswamy et al (2012).
2. Selfie taking behaviour
Selfie taking behaviour was a self-derived questionnaire after reviewing various literature Fox & Rooney (2015), this included components like duration of smart mobile phone use, frequency of taking a selfie, purpose and social media for posting a selfie and persons included in the selfie taken. Each component had further specification as follows
 - a. Duration of smart mobile phone use – 0 to 1 years, 1 to 3 years, 3 to 5 years and more than 5 years.
 - b. Frequency of taking selfie – more than 10 per day, 5 to 10 per day, 1 to 5 per day, 1 to 5 per week and 1 to 5 per month.
 - c. Purpose and Social media for posting a selfie – Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp messenger, personal memory and photography project.
 - d. Persons included in selfie – yourself alone, your family, your friends, specific occasion and specific persons.
3. NPI-16 (Narcissistic Personality Inventory -16)
To measure and assess each individual participant's narcissism as a part of self enhancement of self-perception, grandiose self-view and self-concept, we used the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-16) created by Ames et al., (2006). This scale covers various facets of narcissism such as self-ascribed authority, superiority, and entitlement, as well as self absorption. The NPI-16 is a short measure of subclinical narcissism that has shown meaningful face, internal, discriminant, and predictive validity (Gentile, B et al., 2013). Using items that are drawn from the longer narcissistic personality inventory (NPI-40) developed by Raskin & Terry (1988) like authority, self-sufficiency, superiority, exhibitionism, exploitativeness, vanity, and entitlement; the NPI-16 instructs respondents to read 16 pairs of statements and choose the one that comes closest to describing their true feelings or beliefs. A sample pair of descriptive statements would read "I really like to be the center of attention" and "It makes me uncomfortable to be the centre of attention." Each of the 16 pairs has one statement that is consistent with narcissism and one that is not. The paired statements were given numerical values of zero (0) and one (1), with a score of one assigned to the more narcissistic statement as described in the NPI-40. The obtained Cronbach's alpha reliability estimate was fairly adequate .79; i.e scale is reliable and valid. The scale is scored by counting the number of responses consistent with narcissism (M = 6.74; SD = 3.11). Also, strong associations with PID-5 Antagonism scales across narcissism measures, consistent with the DSM-5's proposed representation of NPD. Aidan G. C. & Wright et al. (2013). NPI 16 has been used to assess narcissism in subjects with cyberbullying, loneliness, self psychology, creativity, athletes, facebook and twitter use, empathy, etc. (Ames, D. R., & Kammrath, L. K., 2004; Füsün Ekşi et al., 2002; Mahajan R, Ünsal Tazegül and Aytakin Soykan, 2013; Alloway, T. et al., 2014; Carpenter C. J., 2012; Fitriyah, F. K., & Purwoko B, 2017).

Results and Discussion

Demographic variables (Table 1) of the subjects (N = 132) were under study, where 66(50%) subjects were of age 25 to 35 years, 76 (58%) were males and 56(42%) were females, 112 (85%) subjects resided

in city, 72 (55%) subjects were married, 100 (76%) subjects had a graduate or post graduate level of education, 88 (67%) subjects were occupied with some specific profession, 126 (95%) subjects had family income per month of equal to Rs.30375 and 59 (45%) belonged to upper socio economic class and 62 (47%) belonged to middle socio economic class.

Table 1. Demographic variables of the subjects (N = 132) under study

Profile	Total	Percentage (%)
Age (years)		
15 – 25	46	35
26 – 35	66	50
36 – 45	10	7.5
46 – 55	10	7.5
Sex		
Male	76	58
Female	56	42
Residence		
City	112	85
Town	20	15
Marital status		
Single (unmarried)	58	44
Engaged	2	1
Married	72	55
Education		
Profession or Honours	20	16
Postgraduate or Graduate	100	76
Intermediate school	2	1
High school	10	7.5
Occupation		
Profession	88	67
Semi-profession	14	11
Clerical, shop-owner, farmer	6	5
Skilled worker	8	6
Unemployed	14	11
Family income per month		
= 30375	126	95
11362-15187	2	1
7594-11361	4	1
Socio economic class		
Upper	59	45
Middle	62	47
Lower	11	8

Regarding the selfie taking behavior variables, we found out that 70 (53%) subjects were using smart phone for more than 5 years, 41 (31%) subjects were having frequency of taking 1 to 5 selfies per week, 56 (42.4%) were taking selfie for personal memory, 42 (32%) were taking for posting on WhatsApp and 42 (32%) were including 'yourself alone' in selfie (Table2)

Table 2. Selfie taking behavior variables

Number of clients	Total	Percentage
Duration of smart phone use		
0 to 1 years	10	7.5
1 to 3 years	32	24.2

3 to 5 years	20	15.1
More than 5 years	70	53
Selfie frequency		
More than 10 per day	7	5.3
5 to 10 per day	19	14.3
1 to 5 per day	26	19.6
1 to 5 per week	41	31.0
1 to 5 per month	39	29.5
Purpose of taking selfie		
Personal memory	56	42.4
Photography project	2	1.5
Posting on Facebook	23	17.4
Posting on Instagram	9	6.8
Posting on Whatsapp	42	31.8
Persons included in selfie		
Yourself alone	38	28.7
Your family	36	27.2
Your friends	11	8.3
Specific persons	13	9.8
Specific occasions	34	25.7

As per the NPI 16 scores (Table 3), majority of the subjects $N = 76$ (57.5%) had high narcissism ($NPI \geq 7$). This suggests that selfie practice is associated with high narcissism.

Table 3. NPI 16 score in subjects ($N = 132$)

NPI 16 score	Number of subjects	Percentage
0 to 6 (Low Narcissism)	56	42.42
≥ 7 (High Narcissism)	76	57.57

On considering the demographic profile and statistical significance testing on a Chi square test ($p < 0.05$) (Table 4) of subjects we found that 65.1% of subjects from age group 25 to 35 years ($p = 0.0200$), 60% ($p = 0.049$) of subjects who stayed in town, 70.6% ($p = 0.00030$) of single-unmarried subjects, 65% ($p = 0.020$) of subjects with profession or honors qualification, 72.2% ($p = 0.04092$) of subjects from family income per month = 30375 and 62.7% ($p = 0.00830$) of subjects from upper socio economic class subjects had NPI scores 0 to 6 suggestive of low narcissism. On further study, the results were 84.8% of subjects from age group 15 to 25 years ($p = 0.0200$), 85.5% of male and 51.7% of female subjects ($p = 0.000023$), 94.6% ($p = 0.049$) of subjects who stayed in city, 64.7% ($p = 0.020$) of subjects with post graduate or graduate qualification, 61.1% ($p = 0.00030$) of married subjects and 61.2% ($p = 0.00830$) of middle socio economic class subjects; had NPI scores ≥ 7 suggestive of high narcissism.

Table 4. Significant Demographics of NPI scores ≥ 7 ($N = 76$)

Demographic (N)	Number of subjects out of $N=132$	NPI scores		p value Chi square test $p < 0.05$ is significant
		0 to 6	≥ 7	
Age (years)				
15 – 25(46)	46	7	39	0.02099
26 – 35(66)	66	23	43	
Sex				

Male (76)	76	11	65	0.00002
Female(56)	56	27	29	
Residence				
City(111)	111	41	71	0.04932
Town(20)	20	12	8	
Marital status				
Single (unmarried) (58)	58	41	17	0.00030
Married (72)	72	28	44	
Education				
Profession or Honours (20)	20	13	7	0.02041
Postgraduate or Graduate(100)	100	37	63	
Occupation				
Profession	88	31	57	0.01028
Semi-profession	14	10	4	
Family income per month				
= 30375 (126)	126	91	35	0.04092
7594-11361(4)	4	1	3	
Socio economic class				
Upper (59)	59	37	22	0.00830
Middle (62)	62	24	38	

On considering the results of selfie taking behavior variables in subjects and NPI scores (Table 5) on Chi square test ($p < 0.5$); 65.7% of the subjects using smart phone use more than 5 years ($p = 0.00942$), 84.2% of the subjects taking 5 to 10 selfies per day with ($p = 0.00331$), 69% of subjects posting selfie for personal memory ($p = 0.03268$), 59.5% of subjects posting selfie on WhatsApp messenger ($p = 0.03268$) and 68.4% of subjects of taking selfie with person alone and 67.6% of subjects with selfie taken on specific occasions ($p = 0.01122$), had NPI scores ≥ 7 suggestive of high narcissism. Also, NPI scores 0 to 6 suggestive of low narcissism were observed in 90% of subjects using smart phone from 0 to 1 years ($p = 0.00942$), 85.7% the subjects taking more than 10 selfies per day with ($p = 0.00331$), 65.2% of subjects posting selfie on Facebook ($p = 0.03268$) and in 66.6% subjects with selfie including family ($p = 0.01122$).

Table 5. Selfie taking behavior variables in subjects and NPI scores

Selfie taking behaviour variables	Number of clients	NPI scores		p value Chi square test $p < 0.05$ is significant
		0 to 6	≥ 7	
Duration of smart phone use				
0 to 1 years	10	9	1	0.00942
1 to 3 years	32	15	17	
3 to 5 years	20	8	12	
More than 5 years	70	24	46	
Frequency of Selfie				
More than 10 per day	7	6	1	0.00331
5 to 10 per day	19	3	16	
1 to 5 per day	26	7	19	
1 to 5 per week	41	19	22	
1 to 5 per month	39	21	18	

Purpose of taking Selfie				
Personal memory	56	17	39	
Photography project	2	1	1	
Posting on Facebook	23	15	8	0.03268
Posting on Instagram	9	6	3	
Posting on Whatsapp	42	17	25	
Persons included in Selfie				
Yourself alone	38	12	26	
Your family	36	24	12	
Your friends	11	3	8	0.01122
Specific persons	13	6	7	
Specific occasions	34	11	23	

This study explores the selfie taking behavior and narcissism among young adults. Data from a total number of 132 subjects were collected. The data were used to consider the demographic profile and its statistical significance with the NPI scores and were calculated. Similar method was used for selfie taking behavior in the subjects. Studies have reported positive associations with grandiose narcissism and selfie posting. (McCain, J. L. et al., 2016 and Salafia, C., & Rimzhim, A. (2020). This study too reports the same. This study reports that the duration and frequency of taking selfie and narcissism are directly proportional i.e., the more the number of selfie taken, higher the NPI scores. The subjects who took 5 to 10 selfies per day had high narcissism; which is similar to a finding that narcissists tend to take more selfies as reported Halpern D et al. (2016). Other studies by Hernowo FA & Mashoedi SF (2018); Cecilia Giordano et al. (2019) and Weiser et al. (2015) reported that narcissism was significantly associated with selfie posting frequency. One of the results reveals that subjects who have been using smart phone more than 5 years have higher narcissism; which supports findings from studies by Pearson and Hussain, (2017); Ksinan, A.J. et al., (2021) that any form of narcissism either grandiose or vulnerable are positively associated with a compulsive smart phone use. Chronic selfitis has been associated with attention seeking and mood changes. Varma, D. R., Sarada, K., & Rani, S. R. (2020). This result might be used as a part of a therapeutic intervention or psycho education in people with compulsive or problematic smart phone use; explaining the fact that reduction in use of smart phones might reduce the narcissism. Posting of selfie on a specific social media platform affects narcissism in varied ways. Studies report higher narcissism with posting of selfie on Facebook (Buffardi and Campbell, 2018; Mehdizadeh, 2010); on Instagram have high narcissism. (Hernowo FA & Mashoedi SF, 2018 and Moon, J. H. et al., 2016) and posting on both Facebook and Instagram. Salafia, C., & Rimzhim, A. (2020). This study has different take on this, reporting that posting selfie on Whatsapp have higher NPI scores. This reveals that privacy is a main concern for sharing or posting self-photographs, WhatsApp being more individual and private messenger than Instagram and Facebook platforms which are more of a general display of posts. The subjects in this study take selfie for their own memory more than posting it on social media platforms. This means that still photograph is taken for personal memories.

Selfie means taking own photos. The study goes through various other people, elements, places, etc included while taking own photo. Most of the subjects included themselves alone in the selfie i.e., mirroring of self into an image was preferred more. Further, majority of the subjects with themselves alone in selfie had higher NPI scores; thus, reflecting their approval seeking or demonstration of grandiose self. Similar results were found from studies by P.Sorokowski et al. (2015); Malik, N. I., et al. (2020) and Salafia, C., & Rimzhim, A. (2020) which report that people post own photos are linked with narcissism. This finding from this study extend to a different dimension of explanation called the 'attraction shading effect'; in which one captures oneself keeping aside the travel or tourist site is observed on social networks of tourists (frequent travelers) which reflects an underpinning narcissism.

Chen, Yu & Mark, Gloria & Ali, Sanna. (2016). Weiser E B (2015) reported that posting selfies is not age dependent; however, in this young adult with age group 15 to 25 years had high narcissism. This finding corroborates with reports from studies by Dutta E et al., Agnieszka Sorokowska et al. and Dhir et al. (2016). There have been a lot of data about gender differences in selfie related behaviour and its relation to narcissism. Male subjects in this study have high narcissism which has been reported by studies from Wang et al. (2012), Hernowo FA & Mashoedi SF (2018); whereas results from studies by Cecilia Giordano et al.; (2019), P.Sorokowski et al.; Dhir et al.; (2016), Ibrahim A et al.; Biolacati R and Passini S (2018) reported females who posted selfies had high narcissism. Narcissism has variable effects on romantic relationships have been studied widely. It affects commitment, faithfulness, possessiveness, self-centeredness and manipulation into a romantic relationship. (Brunell, A. B., & Campbell, W. K.; 2011 and Casale, S., et al.; 2020). Regarding relationship status and narcissism, this study reports that married subjects have a high narcissism as compared to single or unmarried subjects; this reflects that how relationship status and narcissism are related or either they influence each other or are their implications on selfie related behaviours related to narcissism; questions remain to be explored further. On professional and occupation front also, a desire for skill demonstration and work admiration in higher education and specific profession have been linked to narcissism. (Jauk and Sordia, 2018; Oflu, C., Baluku, M. M., & Otto, K. 2020). Our study reports higher narcissism in post graduate subjects and persons pursuing a specific profession. As a trait, narcissism does affect work areas, achievement, goal setting, career, etc which one aspect of personality.

Conclusion

Smaller sample size, self-rated questionnaires, specific age group observations analysis and only grandiose narcissism assessment are the limitations of this study. Further, evaluation over larger population, application of clinical or in person assessment, exploring narcissism as a personality disorder as well as considering other personality disorders can lead to encouraging responses towards narcissism and self-posting behavior.

Selfie and narcissism have positive impact on self-esteem, body satisfaction and life satisfaction. (Kaufman, S. B., Weiss, B., Miller, J. D., & Campbell, W. K., 2020 and Wang, Y. et al., 2020). It is also necessary for leadership skills. But when it goes beyond the constructive aspects of the outcome, it proves detrimental. Selfie and narcissism are closely linked. Self-love, desire for getting more appreciation through self-portrayal on social media and social networking is a trend which is growing. With these types of studies, we try to find out an everyday behavior and its psychological impact. Narcissism leads to personality disorder and functional as well as relationship impairment issues on a progressive basis. Youth are more vulnerable as they spend a lot of time on mobile and social media. The useful and harmful effects of mobile internet and selfie and its impact on personality of an individual is a subject of study and contemplation altogether. Sooner we realize the social media is using us, we should use social media mindfully.

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