

Research Paper

Association of Selfie Behavior, Body-Image and Loneliness among College Students

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ABSTRACT

Selfie taking behavior is paving itself as a way of self-check. Self check on body looks, beauty standard, attractiveness, desirability, time management etc. It is common to find people clicking selfies regularly and frequently to preserve memories but also to save themselves from feeling aloof, awkward and showcase a fulfilled life. Psychological factors like body image and loneliness may impact or get effected by the selfie taking behavior. This study focuses on the level of Selfie Behavior, Body Image and Loneliness among college students and their inter-correlations. The study sampled 278 college going young adults of age range 17-25 years. The measures applied were Selfie Behavior Scale, ULCA Loneliness Scale and Body Image Scale. The findings show significant as well as mixed relations among the study variables. Loneliness is found to be positively significant with selfie behavior sub-variables but not with overall selfie behavior level. Additionally, loneliness is positively significant with negative body image dimensions while negatively significant with positive body image dimensions. This concludes that higher concern towards Body Image seeks higher Loneliness as well as higher Selfie Behavior. Any cognitively distorted thinking pattern regarding self has the potential to hurt the perception affecting our physical and mental well-being negatively. A strong and positive approach towards own body and self will improve our physical as well as mental well-being. Justified selfie-taking is recommended for a healthier lifestyle.

Keywords: *Body Image, College Students, Loneliness, Selfie Behavior*

‘Selfie’ refers to digital pictures taken by oneself through a digital camera like a smartphone (Kaur and Vig, 2016; Qiu et al., 2015). Gaddala et al., (2017) state that “‘Selfies’ is a genuine mental condition and people who feel compelled to continuously post pictures of themselves on social media.” and American Psychiatric Association even suggested that taking too much selfie taking can even indicate Mental Disorder (Singh and Tripathi, 2016).

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In the current era of digitalization, selfie taking has become a method to preserve best memories and events, to maintain presentability and desirability, save oneself from awkwardness, showcasing modern living style of affluent lifestyle, boredom removal, materialism, body image comparison, attention-seeking, etc. The stated utilities of selfie taking may not remain healthy if exceeds a certain limit and becomes a compulsion for consistent self-check for attracting attention, judging self-worth, comparison of body image, being body conscious, loneliness etc. This can lead to development of cognitively distorted thinking pattern having potential to damage the perception towards oneself ending into poor physical and mental well-being. American Psychiatric Association in 2014 classified 'selfie' as "a novel mental disorder having an obsessive-compulsive need to take self-photos and post them on social network sites as a means to make up for the lack of self-esteem and to fill an intimacy gap" (Vincent, 2024).

Rooting to the A-B-C Framework of Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy (REBT) which states that the resulting feelings and emotions (Consequences) do not occur solely due to the Activating event or attitude rather is also enforced by the Beliefs that one holds in mind (Corey, 2016). Implying that our behavior is effected by our thought process and vice-versa. The act of taking selfies may have internal persuasion of comparison with others and lack of satisfaction with own self or own body. As suggested in the study by Modica (2020) that association between selfie posting and body dissatisfaction in males is even modulated by selfie manipulation.

The features in selfie taking applications like beautifying apps, hairstyle apps, photo editing apps, etc. These "beautifying" features carries considerable risk of 'selfie taking' behavior and distorted perception towards own body image. Increase in distorted perception leads to depressive mood and loneliness which again aims to rectify itself by finding worth within the self-worthifying activities and applications forming a vicious cycle. Selfie addiction has been connected to various problems like low self-esteem, loneliness, and depression (Kaur & Vig, 2016).

Loneliness has been defined as "*the sad yearning for intimacy that results from perceived deficiencies in the number and quality of friendships.*" (Hart et al, 2012). It is a phenomenon where a person feels isolated even if surrounded by many forming a condition where there is lack of sharing, communication and feeling of bonding and warmth. Social loneliness is the incongruence between desired number of friends and the actual number of friends and social relations while the emotional loneliness the intensity of social loneliness and lack of social intimacy one feels (Hart et al, 2012). Lack of social interaction may make a person yearn for feeling of connectivity. The act of selfie taking may work as a compensation in such situations.

Body image has been conceptualized by Schilder (1958) as a three dimensional mental representation about oneself. It includes 1. perception, thought, feelings and attitude of one's mental self-image 2. Assessment of their body image and 3. Behavioral outcome. Body image can also be explained as personal feeling which can be modified through social impact (Grogan, 2001).

Researches have been conducted to study selfie-taking behavior in various aspects like Qiu et al. (2015) tried to find an association between personality and selfie-taking behavior and found specific cues between selfies and agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism as well as openness. Charoensukmongkol (2016) found relationship among selfie-liking,

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attention-seeking and self-centered behavior implying that 'selfie' capturing may lead to an unhealthy lifestyle. It additionally found positive relationship between selfie-liking and loneliness proposing that lonely feeling people enjoy selfie-taking more as they feel more concerned about themselves (Charoensukmongkol, 2016). Dutta et al. (2018) noticed a positive trend towards selfie-taking while the attitude was indifferent. They also found that post-graduate students were more concerned about body image without any gender differences.

Rutledge (2013) states that extreme selfie-taking behavior can be regarded as an attention-seeking feature. People with increased self-esteem get a momentary boost at each positive comment or likes they get for their post even stating that people who post a high number of selfies could even be involuntarily in need of critical help while Alblooshi (2015) found that persons with high self-esteem are more prone to post 'selfies' due to their need of seeking attention and social validation. Singh and Tripathi (2016) revealed that suggests the tendency of selfie taking is negatively correlated with self-image and positively correlated with narcissism as well as hyperactivity. Kaur and Vig (2016) in their research found a strong relation between selfie addiction and self-esteem, narcissism, loneliness as well as depression. Kela et al. (2017) state that high selfie-taking behavior makes a person a self-obsessed narcissist.

Varma et al. (2020) revealed that chronic internet users were more attention-seeking, changed mood frequently, had low self-confidence, environmental enhancement, and were socially competitive. Gaddala et al. (2017) found that 77% of the participants took 1 to 2 selfies daily and risk-taking behavior for selfies was 7% while studies like Mohamed and Karim (2019) also concluded that there is no significant differences among levels of selfie-taking behavior, body image, academic achievement and self-esteem.

Hypotheses

- Hypothesis 01- There will be no significant relationship among Selfie Behavior, Loneliness and Body Image among college students.
- Hypothesis 02 - There will be no significant relationship among sub-dimensions of Selfie Behavior and Body Image with Loneliness among college students.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The study sample included 278 college students aging between 17 to 25 years. The participation from both the genders were invited and the snowball sampling method was used to collect the data.

Tools of the study

- Socio-Demographic Data Sheet:** A self-constructed data sheet was used to obtain socio-demographic data of the subject like age, gender, number of siblings, marital status etc.
- Selfitis Behavior Scale:** Selfitis Behavior Scale (SBS) developed by Balakrishnan & Griffiths consisting 20 items on a 5 point Likert scale was employed. It comprises six factors - environmental enhancement, social competition, attention-seeking, mood modification, self-confidence, social conformity. The validity of Selfitis Behavior Scale is above 0.60.

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- c) **ULCA Loneliness Scale:** The ULCA Loneliness developed by D. Russell, L. A. Peplau, and M.L. Ferguson (1978) is a 20 item loneliness measurement scale. The reliability ULCA Loneliness Scale is 0.73 and the construct validity is significant.
- d) **Body Image Scale:** The Body Image Scale developed by R. M. Taani and Dr. R. K. Behmani (2018) is a 28 item 5 point Likert Scale. The reliability range for different dimensions of Body Image Scale is 0.31 to 0.57 and strong validity was found. The scale comprises six factors - weight perception, wish for fit body, satisfaction with body, body part dissatisfaction and health consciousness.

Procedure

The college students were interacted through the online Google Forms. The socio-demographic datasheet and the study tools were properly administered on the samples and descriptive analysis and Pearson's Correlation was carried out.

RESULT

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the sample (N=278).

Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Dev.
Age	17 years	25 years	21.5	2.29
Gender	1	2	1.71	0.45
Qualification	1	4	1.77	1.08
Marital Status	1	3	1.98	0.31
Employment Status	1	2	1.92	0.26
No of Siblings	0	5	2.22	1.35
SBS Total	20	112	67.03	15.97
Body Image Total	20	115	68.9	18.71
Loneliness Total	0	60	25.73	11.78

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of sample (N= 278).

Variables		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	17-19	86	30.9
	20-22	116	36.7
	23-25	56	26.3
Gender	Male	81	29.1
	Female	197	70.9
Qualification	Pursuing Graduation	172	61.9
	Completed Graduation	29	10.4
	Pursuing Post Graduation	46	16.5
	Completed Post Graduation	31	11.2
Marital Status	Married	17	6.1
	Unmarried	250	89.9
	In Relationship	11	4
Employment Status	Employed	21	7.6
	Unemployed	257	92.4
No of Siblings	Zero	18	6.5
	One	73	26.3
	Two	85	30.6
	Three	54	19.4
	Four	35	12.6
	Five	8	2.9
	Six	5	1.9

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Table 3: Pearson's r among the study variables (N = 278).

Variable	SB	Loneliness	WP	WFB	SB	BD	HC
SB	1	.66	.354**	.406**	.111	.218**	.255**
Loneliness		1	.197**	.151*	-.252**	.415**	-.181*

* .05 significance (2 - tailed)

** .01 significance (2 - tailed)

Table 3 shows that there is no significant correlation between loneliness and selfie behavior. Implying that neither the feeling of loneliness induces a person to indulge in selfie taking behavior nor the selfie taking behavior moderates the level of loneliness. But the dimensions of body image are found to have significant correlations with selfie behavior as well as loneliness.

Table 4: Pearson's r among the sub scales of study variables (N = 278).

Variables	L	WP	WF B	SB	BD	HC	EE	SC 1	AS	MM	SC 2	SC 3
Loneliness	1	.197 **	.151 *	- .252 **	.415 **	- .181 **	.142 *	.224 **	.191 **	.152 *	.161 **	.185 **
Weight Perception		1	.312 **	- .118 *	.485 **	.016	.183 **	.247 **	.244 **	.172 **	.160 **	.215 **
Wish for Fit Body			1	.006	.264 **	.321 **	.352 **	.256 **	.322 **	.194 **	.250 **	.286 **
Satisfaction with Body				1	- .394 **	.344 **	.136 *	.049	.025	.072	.067	.070
Body Part Dissatisfaction					1	- .179 **	.243 **	.401 **	.352 **	.293 **	.259 **	.363 **
Health Consciousness						1	.068	- .069	.047	.041	.057	.034
Environmental Enhancement							1	.646 **	.659 **	.665 **	.682 **	.630 **
Social Competition								1	.702 **	.649 **	.603 **	.700 **
Attention Seeking									1	.690 **	.633 **	.665 **
Mood Modification										1	.746 **	.676 **
Self Confidence											1	.634 **
Subjective Conformity												1

* .05 significance (2 - tailed)

** .01 significance (2 - tailed)

Table 4 shows correlations among different dimensions of the Selfie Behavior, Body Image and Loneliness score. The study reveals that there are significant relationships among these variables. Loneliness is found to be positively significant with Weight Perception, Wish for

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Fit Body, Body Dissatisfaction, Environmental Enhancement, Social Competition, Attention Seeking, Mood Modification, Self- Confidence as well as Subjective Conformity while negatively significant with Satisfaction with Body and Health Consciousness.

DISCUSSION

This study intended to find the interrelationships among Loneliness, Selfie Behavior and Body Image along with their sub- dimensions among college students. The results show that there are significant correlations among the study variables. Based on results the first hypothesis proposing no significant relationship among Selfie Behavior, Body Image and Loneliness among the college students has been partially rejected as selfie behavior is significantly and positively correlated with body image but not significant with loneliness. Also, that loneliness is significantly correlated with body image dimensions in both negative and positive directions. These correlations indicate that the positive body image dimensions like health consciousness and satisfaction with body does not give way to occurrences of loneliness while negative body image dimensions like perceiving weight, wishing for fit body and body part dissatisfaction does. This proves that beliefs work more than activating events in generating consequences in line to the A-B-C-Framework (Corey, 2016)

The 2nd Hypothesis proposing no significant relationship among sub-dimensions of Selfie Behavior and Body Image with Loneliness among college students has been strongly rejected as results show strongly significant correlations among all the sub-dimensions of body image as well as selfie behavior. Additionally, increased Loneliness and Poor Body Image increases the level of Selfie Behavior. The dimensions of Selfie Behavior are either negative or non- significantly correlated with Body Satisfaction and Health Consciousness which are positive dimensions of body image.

This implies that higher concern towards Body Image seeks higher Loneliness as well as higher Selfie Behavior in a person. Also, higher Selfie Behavior seeks higher Loneliness as well as concern towards Body Image. This may be because increase in Loneliness advances the feeling of aloofness which makes a person feel inferior and not worthy. College students with high selfie taking behavior remain dissatisfied with their body image and viciously become more prone to take selfie and progressively loneliness captures them.

The total positive correlation of loneliness with all factors of Selfie behavior indicates that feelings of loneliness makes in individual more prone to enhance their environment or feel good voluntarily, seek attention or be somewhat narcissistic, voluntarily change their mood, confirm with social norms for more acceptance as well as show interest in socially competitive tasks. These findings are in line with the previous researches like Modica, (2020), Singh and Tripathi, (2016) as well as Charoensukmongkol, (2016) but in contrast to findings by Chae, (2017) stating that activities like social comparison and selfie editing are not caused due to dissatisfaction with their appearance rather due to ideal self-presentation online.

CONCLUSION

This study finds that Selfie Behavior, Body Image and Loneliness are significantly correlated with each other. Loneliness is found to be positively significant with selfie behavior sub-variables but not with overall selfie behavior level. Also Loneliness is positively significant with negative Body Image dimensions while negatively significant with positive body image dimensions. This concludes that higher concern towards Body Image seeks higher Loneliness as well as higher Selfie Behavior. A strong and positive

approach towards own body, sense of satisfaction towards it and positive consciousness towards it can improve the lifestyle, physical as well as mental well-being. The excess clicking of selfies indicates lack of confidence and demanding behavior which is again an indicator of high level of loneliness and poor perception of own body resulting in requirement of social conformity, social competition, mood modification, attention seeking and activities that enhance the environment. Positive belief towards oneself will lead to positive consequences and activities further leading to best of psycho-social health.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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