

# Research in Pharmacy and Health Sciences

## Review Article

### Selfie Syndrome: A Disease of New Era

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#### ABSTRACT

Over a period of time, technological advancement has given us new addiction disorders. Last two decades were known for computer addiction disorder and internet addiction disorders. Smartphone has included in our daily life that without which we cannot survive. Many of today generation Smartphone's are equipped with high resolution camera, which we call it as "selfie" camera. Though people were fond of taking photographs of their own and others since many decades, with selfie camera it has led to an extreme level. It is coupled with posting the selfie photographs on social networking sites. Further they are waiting for comments and opinions of friends and others. This has led to a chain of reactions leading to a complex addiction disorder which we may easily be called as "Selfie addiction disorder/Selfie syndrome".

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#### INTRODUCTION:

A selfie is a self-portrait photograph, usually taken with a digital camera or camera phone held in the hand or supported by a selfie stick. Selfies are often shared on social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, etc. They are usually flattering and complimentary and made to appear casual. Most selfies are taken with a camera held at arm's length. A selfie stick may be used to widen the angle of view, such as for group selfies.[1]

Now-a-days more and more people choose to put their live updates on display on Facebook and Twitter. The social networks in general are becoming the ultimate of narcissism, [2] with many people striving to be always in the spotlight. Problems, successes and personal events are made public hoping to draw somebody's attention.

#### HISTORY OF THE TERM "SELFIE"[3]

Despite "selfie" becoming a phenomenon of the 21st century, the act of sharing a selfie with friends pre-dates the Internet. The act of distributing pocket sized photo cards, dates back to the 1860's. "Robert Cornelius", an American pioneer in photography, produced a daguerreotype of himself in 1839 which is also one of the first photographs of a person. Because the process was slow he was able to uncover the lens, run into the shot for a minute or more, and then replaces the lens cap. He recorded on the back "The first light Picture ever taken. 1839." In 1880, the photo booth was introduced, which fascinate people to take self-photographs just as they still do today. The invention of the self-timer in the late 1880s allowed for any individual taking a photograph to preset their camera and allow themselves 5 to 10 seconds to get into a shot. This is believed to be the initiation of what is now known as a selfie, or self-photograph. In 1948, the first

Polaroid camera was sold. This camera could be held at an arm's length, which encouraged individuals to take more confidential self-photos.

The earliest usage of the word *selfie* can be imitated as far back as 2002. It first appeared in Karl Kruszelnicki's 'Dr Karl Self-Serve Science Forum', an Australian internet forum (ABC Online) on 13 September 2002.

#### SELF-ESTEEM LEVELS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Self-esteem refers to an overall positive or negative evaluation of the self. One way of fulfilling self-esteem needs is the use of social media to communicate interpersonally which might provide an opportunity for people with low self-esteem to engage in public behaviour with reduced risk of disgrace and reduced social anxiety. People use social media for many reasons such as to get information and news, entertainment, or a way to communicate with others. Therefore, individuals will find the best social media outlet that suits them the most to fulfil their needs and make them achieve pleasure. The reason stated was that the teens and the people at the age between 18 and 34 years use digital media more heavily than older people. The selfie statistics indicated that about half (47%) of adults were taking selfies. About 40% of people aged between 18 and 34 admitted to taking selfies at least once per week. At the same time, women are believed to take selfies 1.3 times more than men.

#### IMPACT OF SELFIES ON SELF-ESTEEM LEVELS:

Selfies are a double-edged sword. For some people, posting selfies is a self-confidence booster, and for others, selfies are the reason that makes them feel awful about their lives and

having insecurities about their appearances. Most teenagers spend considerably more time and money to look attractive to others and consequently, boost their self-esteem.

### SELFIES AS SELF-CONFIDENCE BOOSTERS

People who use selfies most often believe that selfies could boost their self-confidence. The number of positive comments and likes that one receives for their selfies was reported to influence the level of one's self-confidence, especially in the people with low self-esteem. A psychologist, the people with low self-esteem posts more selfies to have a boost in their self-confidence. Selfies are one of the impressive tools that help a person feel good about himself or herself. This reveals that selfies have the power to boost one's self-confidence.

### NARCISSISM AND SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Narcissism is characteristically illuminated as an affinity to believe one's self to be superior over others, to constantly pursue admiration from others, and to participate in egotistical thinking and behaviour.

Social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, offer an easy way to participate in the attention-seeking, self-important behaviours of narcissists. It is important for narcissists to share their experiences because they believe all of their followers and social networking friends are genuinely interested in knowing what they are doing. Social networking sites give narcissistic individuals the chance to keep the focus of their profile's content specifically on themselves.

### SOCIAL NETWORK SITES AS EDUCATIONAL TOOL

Social media is the future of communication, a countless array of Internet based tools and platforms that increase and enhance the sharing of information. This new form of media makes the transfer of text, photos, audio, video, and information progressively among Internet users. There is now a robust debate on the educational purposes of social network sites. Educational use of social media was thought to be an eligible subject for the study because of the following reasons:

The number of social network users in extreme communication was high; every user knew the setting and Facebook offered e-mail, forums and chats as a learning management system did. On the other hand, it was critical to admit the reasons for daily intended use of the applications and rapid spreading since it could define possible factors to influence educational use.

Social networks are platforms for essential social lives created by people over the Internet. Individuals define themselves in such networks so that they communicate with other people sharing same or different cultural backgrounds/dimensions through compelling communication opportunities provided by the Internet.

### CURRENT SCENARIO

The number of selfie photos in Facebook has grown exceedingly in the recent years. With the development of mobile technology to the like of smartphones and tablets, the process of taking selfie has been easier as compared to the

past. The obsessive selfie-taking has been classified as a mental disorder and many psychologists have categorized this kind of disorder as 'selfitis'. Social media is the prospective of communication, a countless array of Internet based tools and platforms that increase and enhance the sharing of information. The selfie is a phenomenon that has taken over the world quite quickly. Oxford English Dictionary had described "Selfie" as word of the year in 2013.

### NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON YOUTH

- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
- Depression
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder
- Narcissistic personality disorder
- Hypochondriasis
- Schizo-affective disorder
- Body dysmorphia
- Voyeurism
- Addiction

### EFFECTS OF SELFIES ON SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PEOPLE

Some researchers linked the habit of taking a lot of selfies to narcissism, isolation, and even suicide. Social platforms like Instagram, Snapchat and the iPhone app Selfie., which are solely image based, force patients to hold a microscope up to their own image and often look at it with a more self-critical eye than ever before. These images are often the first impressions young people put out there to prospective friends, romantic interests and employers and our patients want to put their best face forward.

**Psychopathy:** Impulsivity and lack of empathy. Those high in psychopathy are likely to agree with statements like "Payback needs to be quick and nasty."

**Machiavellianism:** Manipulativeness without regard for other's needs. Those high on this trait tend to have little concern about morals.

**Self-objectification:** This is a tendency to view your body as an object based on its sexual worth. Those high in self-objectification tend to see themselves in terms of their physical appearance and base their self-worth on their appearance.

### EPIDEMIOLOGY

Exact prevalence is not known but as per the experts, approximately 40% or higher percentage of teenage, young and adult population in the developed world are suffering from the selfie syndrome with the manifestations varying from mild to severe. World wide availability of smart phones, Wi-Fi and mobile data package has worsened this scenario further.[4]

### PATHOGENESIS

Selfie addiction is a new pathology, often related to past bullying and low self-esteem. Psychiatrists are beginning to consider the compulsion to take selfies as a serious mental health problem, although precise mechanism of selfie

syndrome is not known but it is assumed to be due to imbalance between the excitatory and inhibitory neurotransmitters. Serotonergic pathway could also be involved. However this needs further elucidation for biochemical and neuro physiological testings.[4]

### CLINICAL FEATURES

Selfie syndrome reflects a combination of the wide spectrum of varying degree of Neuro-psychiatric disorders. Some persons may have underlying stress disorder, self-obsessed and narcissistic generation, obsessive compulsive behaviour, anxiety, mania or even bipolar disorder but a new study suggests that it can even be linked to body dysmorphia. Taking Selfies could lead to narcissism, addiction, mental illness and even suicide. This syndrome is characterized by most of the time sticking on the social media network via face book, Twitter, Instagram, what's app, etc.[4]

### COMPLICATIONS

These patients get easily distracted from their important official work with less productivity and poor performance in the work place, job dissatisfaction, unseen stress, peer pressure, unhealthy family relations, marital conflicts etc. It may lead to orthopaedics complications viz, computer related work injuries, cervical spondylitis, low back pain, fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, carpal tunnel, tennis elbow, frozen shoulder etc due to prolonged use of the thumbs for typing, awkward posture of the body while using the phone or computer for social media and even catastrophic road traffic accidents while using phones during driving. [4]

### CONSEQUENCES OF SELFIE SYNDROME

A recent survey conducted by the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery revealed that selfies are behind a boom in young people seeking plastic surgery contributed to a 10% increase in nose jobs, 7% increase in hair transplants and a 6% increase in eyelid surgery in 2013 compared with 2012. The survey also found that the pervasiveness of social media is driving down the age of people having plastic surgery, with 58% of the surveyed members reporting an increase in cosmetic surgery and 'injectables' in patients under 30yrs age. It's hardly a surprise that social media is increasing body dissatisfaction. [4]

### TREATMENT

#### Individual and group therapy [5]

- Individual therapy allows addressing addiction and mental/behavioural health concerns with a therapist (e.g., social worker, psychologist, and intern).
- Group therapy allows sharing the issues in a supportive community of others who are having similar struggles.
- Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) addresses dysfunctional thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are perpetuating mental health disorder or addictive behaviours. CBT helps to identify these underlying

thoughts, feelings, and beliefs, and develop strategies to change them.

- Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) is typically used when an individual is severely *emotionally dysregulated*, or they have a hard time controlling their feelings and actions. DBT helps people gain more control over their emotions, while paradoxically learning to "nonjudgmentally observe" them using *mindfulness* skills.
- Motivational Interviewing (MI) works to "meet you with where you are at" in patient's addiction or behavioral concern.

#### Private counselling

Behavioural counselling emphasizing on self-motivation and self-control on unnecessary use of social media, giving quality time to family and friends.

#### Alternative Treatment Approaches

- Psychotherapy
- Meditation or yoga
- Equine therapy
- Recreation therapy etc.

### CONCLUSION

The Millennial Generation uses social media to generate and maintain not only personal relationships, but also their own idealized personalities. With social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter being their main channel for social interaction, it is not surprising to find that many Millennials feel the need to present themselves in ways that attract the most attention from their peers. Scientific community all over the world has to come together and come to some kind of conclusion at the earliest for developing a specific diagnostic criteria based on amount of time spent & number of selfy's taken per day. If selfies, specifically, are proven in the future to cause these negative mental health issues, it would most likely come as no surprise to experts in the fields of psychology and medicine. Prospective large surveys are needed including a large numbers of persons who are actively involved on such social media to find out the underlying psycho-social factors responsible for selfie syndrome and the possible consequences of this syndrome. As described earlier, no scientific management of selfie is available. Probably some kind of behavioral therapy or counseling may help.

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