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Research Article

### SELFIE-CRAZE AND NARCISSISM AMONG MEDICAL STUDENTS: STUDY OF COMMUNITY MEDICINE AND PSYCHIATRY

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*Selfie taking and posting them on social media is one of the leading trends in young generation today. Our study is based on impacts of this trend on human psychology and to find out role of selfie in building narcissistic characteristics among individuals.*

**Objectives:**

*To find out relation between selfie-addiction and having a narcissistic personality. Comparison of prevalence of selfie-linked narcissism among both genders.*

**Method:**

*Our study was conducted on students of Allama Iqbal Medical College under supervision of the department of Psychiatry and community medicine. Sample size was 200 consisting of equal number of males and females from each class. It was a cross-sectional study and sampling technique was convenient sampling. NPI inventory was used as a scale to measure narcissistic traits among individuals. Students taking anti-psychotics and anti-depressants were excluded.*

**Results:**

*We succeeded in finding a positive correlation between selfie addiction and narcissism focusing on the traits of authority, desire to be the center of attraction and considering oneself extra ordinary. However, narcissism level was almost equal among both genders, statistically significant difference wasn't found.*

**Keywords:** *Selfie, Narcissism, Students of Allama Iqbal Medical College.*

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## INTRODUCTION:

'Selfie' is "a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a Smartphone or webcam and uploaded to a social media website [1]". About 93 million selfies are taken each day. Approximate number of photos shared online in 2014 was an astounding 880 billion [2]. Makati City, Philippines has the highest prevalence of selfie-takers, 258/100,000 people [3].

The selfie posting behavior is being linked with 'Narcissism'. "Narcissism is typically illustrated as a tendency to believe one's self to be superior to others, to persistently pursue admiration from others, and to participate in egotistic thinking and behavior". Narcissism is simply one's craving to be in constant spotlight. [4]

As excess of everything is bad; too much selfie taking comes with its fair share of disadvantages, and of particular importance is selfie-associated "Narcissism".

The word narcissism comes from a Greek myth of Narcissus, who fell in love with himself when he gazed into a reflection pool. Selfies and social networking sites are like that reflecting pool that have made one become self obsessed and fall in love with oneself. Selfie has become the ultimate symbol of the narcissistic age.

The Selfie craze is at its ultimate peak & the millennial generation is 'Generation Me'. This obsession for clicking all kinds of selfies has been creating havoc across the globe with people literally dying to get a perfect selfie.

The question arises: "Is Selfie merely a way of self expression or a sign of narcissism?" The purpose of the research is to find out whether there is a link between selfie & narcissism. The social media has played a crucial role in rise of narcissism among young generation<sup>5</sup>. Research says that negative impacts of selfie & social media do include sense of superiority & pride among others<sup>6</sup>. A study by San Diego State University Professor Twenge shows that narcissism levels have risen steadily during the past few decades, making the Millennial Generation more selfish and self-absorbed than any other previous generation. [4]

Weiser's study that explored the association between posting selfies and three facets of narcissism, Leadership, Grandiose Exhibitionism and Entitlement showed that narcissism exhibited positive and significant associations with selfie

posting frequency. [7] Also, study says, the individuals who score high on four narcissism subscales, Self-sufficiency, Vanity, Leadership & Self-admiration, are more likely to post selfies than those with low narcissism. This association has been found more strongly in men than women [8].

Fox's study of the Dark Triad (Machiavellianism, Narcissism & Psychopathy) & trait self-objectification showed Narcissism is associated with not only posting more selfies but also editing photos that are posted on SNSs [9]. Korean researchers have found out that narcissists evince keen interest about the feedback they get on their pictures, & are also really observant of other's people's selfies [10].

As selfie-craze has become a leading social problem & its connection with narcissism poses a threat to society, there is a need to study this topic. The aim of this study was to assess association of narcissism with selfie craze in medical students and to assess relation of narcissism with selfie-craze in both genders.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS:

Study design: Cross sectional Study

Setting: Allama Iqbal Medical College, Lahore, under supervision of the department of Psychiatry and community medicine

Duration: 3 months

Sample size: 200 students from five classes (40 students from each class, 20 males, 20 females)

Sampling technique: Convenient Sampling

Operational Definition:

Association: a connection between things where one is caused by the other [14].

Selfie: a photo of yourself that you take, typically with a smartphone or a webcam, and usually put on a social networking site [15].

Narcissism: Excessive preoccupation with or admiration of oneself. Or A personality disorder characterized by an exaggerated sense of self-importance, need for admiration, and lack of empathy [16].

Inclusion criteria: The research includes students from all five years of MBBS studying at Allama Iqbal Medical College.

Exclusion criteria: The students diagnosed with any psychiatric illness or those taking any antipsychotic &/or antidepressant have been excluded from this research.

A questionnaire was developed for conducting this research. This questionnaire containing a total of 20 questions was distributed in each class. It contained 10 self-developed questions and a 10-item Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) was used for the remaining questions. The 10-item NPI is a short version of Raskin and Terry's 40-item NPI<sup>17</sup> consisting of questions chosen by the researchers. For each item, the narcissism-consistent response is scored a 1 and the non-narcissism-inconsistent response is scored 0. All participants were assured confidentiality to ensure honest responses.

### RESULTS:

200 respondents took part in the research. The data analysis was done on SPSS version 17. The first question that the respondents were asked was whether they took selfies or not and as **Table 1** shows majority of the students i.e. 181 out of 200 (90.5%) respondents take selfies.

**Table 2** shows that when compared among genders 93 out of 100 female respondents took selfies while 88 out of 100 male respondents took selfies.

**Table 3** shows that the main reason for taking selfies was to make memories (87 responses) followed by the need to get attention and admiration (39 responses). Some people did it merely to pass time (29 responses) and the remaining took selfies to update people about their life (25 responses).

**Table 4** shows the frequency of posting selfies each week. 59% posted them 0-1 per week, 20% posted them 2-5 times per week, 6.5% posted 5-10 selfies per week and 4.5% posted more than 10.

**Table 5** shows the results of 10 questions that were asked from the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI). The table shows comparison between the

people who take selfies and those who do not. As the response shows narcissistic traits are more prevalent among those who take selfies.

**Table 6** shows the comparison of responses to NPI questions among males and females.

**Table 7** shows statistically significant association of having an authoritative nature, which is a narcissistic trait, among those who take selfies ( $p=0.037$ )

**Table 8** shows a highly statistically significant association ( $p=0.000$ ). It shows that people who take selfies have a tendency to think that they are extraordinary people.

**Table 9** depicts a highly statistically significant relationship that those who take selfies enjoy being the center of attention much more compared to those who don't take selfies ( $p=0.000$ )

**Table 10** is a comparison between males and females. It shows that there is no significant association of having an authoritative nature in a particular gender ( $p=0.077$ )

**Table 11** is another comparison between both genders regarding the narcissistic characteristic of thinking that they are extraordinary. There is no significant association ( $p=1.000$ )

**Table 12**, which compares the desire to be center of attention among males and females, shows no significant result ( $p=0.195$ )

Respondents were also asked whether they edited their pictures in order to look more attractive or not. The results, as shown in **Figure 1**, clearly show that a greater number of people (118 out of 200) edit their pictures.

**Table 1. Selfie Taking frequency among students of AIMC**

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	181	90.5
No	19	9.5
Total	200	100.0

**Table 2. Selfie Taking frequency among both genders**

Question	Response	Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Do you take selfies?	Yes	88	93	181
	No	12	7	19
Total		100	100	200

**Table 3. Frequency of different reasons for taking selfies**

Response	Frequency	Percent
To gain attention and admiration	39	19.5
To pass time	29	14.5
To update people about your life	25	12.5
To make memories	87	43.5
Total	180	90.0
Missing	20	10.0
Total	200	100.0

**Table 4. Frequency of posting selfies on social media**

Response	Frequency	Percent
0-1 per week	118	59.0
2-5 per week	40	20.0
5-10 per week	13	6.5
More than 10	9	4.5
Total	180	90.0
Missing	20	10.0
Total	200	100.0

**Table 5. Comparison of frequency of responses to NPI questions among those who take selfies and those who don't**

Question	Take Selfies			Total
	Response	Yes	No	
Do you like to be center of attraction or prefer to blend in with the crowd?	Blend in with the crowd	65	16	81
	Center of Attraction	116	3	119
Total		181	19	200
Do you like having authority over other people or don't mind following orders?	Don't mind following Orders	61	11	72
	Like having authority	120	8	128
Total		181	19	200
Do you have natural talent for influencing people or you are not good at it?	Not good at influencing	48	10	58
	Influence people	133	9	142
Total		181	19	200
Do you get embarrassed when people compliment you or you already know you are good?	I am embarrassed	100	13	113
	I know I am good	81	6	87
Total		181	19	200
Do you think you are extraordinary person or are like everybody else?	I am like everybody else	96	18	114
	I am extraordinary	85	1	86

Total		181	19	200
Do you think you are more capable than others or you can learn a lot from other people?	I can learn a lot from others	118	17	135
	I am more capable	63	2	65
Total		181	19	200
		Take Selfies		
Question	Response	Yes	No	Total
Do you like to be center of attraction or prefer to blend in with the crowd?	Blend in with the crowd	65	16	81
	Center of Attraction	116	3	119
Do you like to look yourself in the mirror or you are not interested?	Not interested	54	13	67
	Like to look in the mirror	127	6	133
Total		181	19	200
Do you try not to show off or show off when you get the chance?	Don't show off	145	17	162
	Show off	36	2	38
Total		181	19	200
Do you think you are a born leader or is leadership a quality that takes a long time to develop?	Leadership takes time	83	16	99
	I am a born leader	98	3	101
Total		181	19	200
Do you expect great deal	Do for others	115	15	130

from other people or you like to do things for other people?	Expect from others	66	4	70
	Total	181	19	200

**Table 6. Comparison of frequency of responses among males and females to NPI Questions**

Question	Response	Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Do you like to be center of attraction or prefer to blend in with the crowd?	Blend in with the crowd	36	45	81
	Center of Attraction	64	55	119
Total		100	100	200
Do you like having authority over other people or don't mind following orders?	Don't mind following Orders	30	42	72
	Like having authority	70	58	128
Total		100	100	200
Do you have natural talent for influencing people or you are not good at it?	Not good at influencing	34	24	58
	Influence people	66	76	142
Total		100	100	200
Do you get embarrassed when people compliment you or you already know you are good?	I am embarrassed	57	56	113
	I know I am good	43	44	87
Total		100	100	200

Do you think you are an extraordinary person or are like everybody else?	I am like everybody else	57	57	114
	I am extraordinary	43	43	86
Total		100	100	200
Do you think you are more capable than others or you can learn a lot from other people?	I can learn a lot from others	62	73	135
	I am more capable	38	27	65
Total		100	100	200
Do you like to look yourself in the mirror or you are not interested?	Not interested	32	35	67
	Like to look in the mirror	68	65	133
		Gender		
Question	Response	Male	Female	Total
Do you like to be center of attraction or prefer to blend in with the crowd?	Blend in with the crowd	36	45	81
	Center of Attraction	64	55	119
Total		100	100	200
Do you try not to show off or show off when you get the chance?	Don't show off	76	86	162
	Show off	24	14	38
Total		100	100	200
Do you think you are a born leader or is leadership a quality that takes a long time to develop?	Leadership takes time	50	49	99
	I am a born leader	50	51	101
Total		100	100	200



Do you expect great deal from other people or you like to do things for other people?	Do for others	59	71	130
	Expect from others	41	29	70
Total		100	100	200

**Table 7. Difference of authoritative nature among those who take selfies and those who don't**

		Do you like having authority over other people or don't mind following orders?		Total
		Don't mind following orders	Like having authority	
Do you take selfies?	Yes	61	120	181
	No	11	8	19
Total		72	128	200

Chi square 4.368 p=.037

**Table 8. Thinking they are extraordinary-difference among those who take selfies and those who don't**

		Do you think you an extraordinary person or are like everybody else?		Total
		I am like everybody else	I am extraordinary	
Do you take selfies?	Yes	96	85	181
	No	18	1	19
Total		114	86	200

Chi Square=12.198 p=0.000

**Table 9. Being center of attraction – difference between those who take selfies and those who don't**

		Do you like to be center of attraction or prefer to blend in with the crowd?		Total
		Blend in with the crowd	Center of Attraction	
Do you take selfies?	Yes	65	116	181
	No	16	3	19
Total		81	119	200

Chi square= 16.646      p=.000

**Table 10. Difference of authoritative nature among males and females**

		Do you like having authority over other people or don't mind following orders?		Total
		Don't mind following orders	Like having authority	
Gender	Male	30	70	100
	Female	42	58	100
Total		72	128	200

Chi square=3.125      p=.077

**Table 11. Thinking they are extraordinary-difference among males and females**

	Do you think you an extraordinary person or are like everybody else?		Total
	I am like everybody else	I am extraordinary	
Gender Male	57	43	100
Female	57	43	100
Total	114	86	200

Chi square=.000 p=1.000

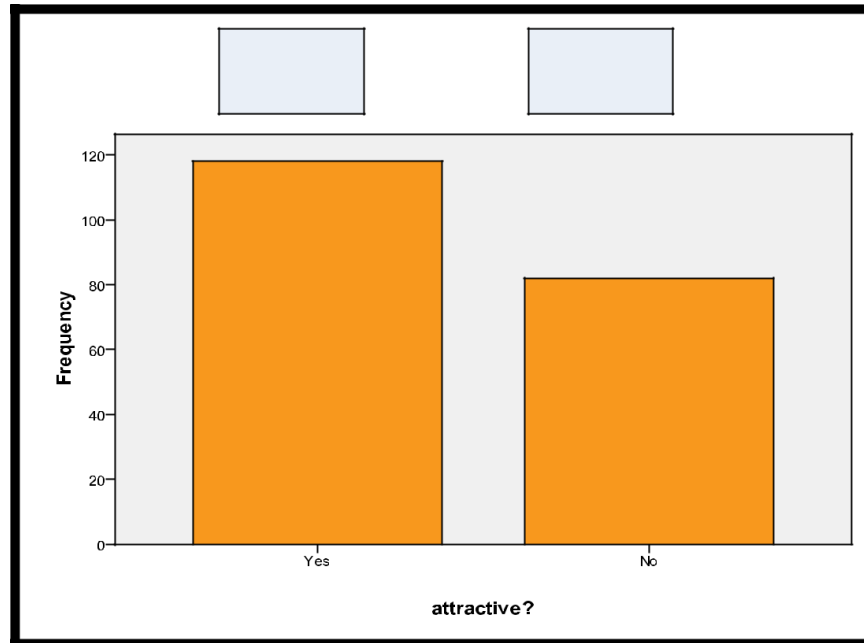
**Table 12. Being center of attraction – difference between males and females**

	Do you like to be center of attraction or prefer to blend in with the crowd?		Total
	Blend in with the crowd	Center of Attraction	
Gender Male	36	64	100
Female	45	55	100
Total	81	119	200

Chi square=1.681

p=.195

**Figure 1. Frequency and percentage of participants who edit their selfies to look more attractive**



### DISCUSSION:

Selfie has become the most popular genre of photos today. Selfie has established itself as a form of self expression and these days everyone is taking selfies, though some people more than others. Therefore, due to this ever increasing popularity it is has become necessary to find out whether taking selfies is a harmless fad or a dangerous sign of narcissism.

The perfect-selfie obsession has now become a deadly hazard. In 2015, selfies resulted in the deaths of more people worldwide than those from shark attacks in attempts to take a daring selfie<sup>11</sup>. A teen took over 200 selfies for 10 hours a day in order to get his ideal picture & when he couldn't do so he tried to kill himself<sup>12</sup>. India witnessed most 'selfie deaths' in 2015 [13].

We conducted study to find out the association between selfie taking and narcissism among students of AIMC. The results of the study indicate a positive association among both.

Self-expression is a basic human need but excessive selfie taking has promoted narcissistic behavior among individuals. Self-obsessed individuals consider selfie as a platform to seek attention and appreciation. While a number of empirical studies focus on social networking sites acting as conduits for narcissistic

personality expression our study primarily focuses on presence of narcissistic traits among selfie addicts.

Ten statements from the Narcissistic Personality Inventory [17] were used in this research to assess selfie-associated narcissism. To narrow down our research three statements were selected to find out significant association between these two parameters. These statements were seeking authority, considering oneself an extraordinary person and a lingering desire to be a center to attraction. The reason for choosing these statements was that they cover three major elements of narcissism i.e. leadership, vanity and admiring demand respectively [8].

Our results show that there is a positive and statistically significant association between selfie taking and these narcissistic qualities. The results show that people who take selfies have a strong craving to be in constant spotlight, they wish to be the authority in everything and such people tend to think that they are extraordinary individuals.

The people like to be admired can also be proved from the fact that 59% people who took part in our research edit their selfies merely to look more attractive. As discussed previously it is a prominent narcissistic trait to seek attention and admiration.

Another aim of this study was to find out the prevalence of selfie-associated narcissism among males and females. Selfie taking frequency is almost equally high in both the genders. Based on our results there is no significant association of selfie-associated narcissism in a particular gender. This is in contrast to Sorokowski's study<sup>8</sup> that stated the link between selfie and narcissism is stronger among men as compared to women. The difference in our study maybe due to the fact that our sample size was much smaller compared to the previous study.

### CONCLUSION:

We come to a conclusion that selfie is an emerging way of self-portrayal and is a key factor in arousal of narcissistic behavior among millennial generation. Strong urge of self-expression is ultimately driving people to become self-loving and conceited or in other words to become narcissistic individuals.

### Limitations of our study:

The limitations of our study are being restricted to a small area and a small sample size. Further it involved students belonging to similar age groups so impact of age couldn't be studied as selfies are not only taken by individuals in their late teens and early adulthood who are attending a medical college but the selfie fever has affected almost everyone everywhere.

### Recommendations:

People should be discouraged to take excessive selfies. It is to be noted that it isn't bad to take selfies but it is bad to excess selfies especially going to dangerous extents in doing so. The Russian Interior Ministry has launched a "safe selfie" campaign. Similarly different governments can launch different campaigns focusing on various disadvantages of selfie and educating the people. A problem in our society is that psychiatric issues are not dealt properly and people lack basic education regarding those. Therefore, people must be educated regarding the psychological changes selfies can have on them and the narcissistic personality disorder should be appropriately explained. People should be enlightened about the effects such a self-obsessed behavior can have on their life, on their health and their relationships.

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