

Selfitis: A Newer Behavioral Addiction – A Review

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INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technologies (ICT) have now become an indispensable part of every individual's life and with the proliferation of inexpensive mobile devices that too with internet access has brought therefore an epidemiological transition in the society, influenced life tremendously. While the smartphones provide apparent benefits, it also induces some behavior disorder like compulsive checking habits, internet addiction, game addiction and many more as shown by several studies. Selfitis one such behavior disorder.

Everyday people especially teens are immune to the self-promotion available through social media with various editing software and links to numerous sharing platforms. But sharing flattering pictures become a problem when this behavior is a way to gain attention, compensate for low self-esteem, and compensate for lack of intimacy.¹

In 2014 American Psychiatric Association (APA) claimed that there are people having obsessive compulsive desire to take photos of themselves and post them on social media as a way to make up for the lack of self-esteem and termed this behavior disorder as selfitis.^{2, 3, 4}

Like gambling, there are many other non-drug behaviour are likely to be established as addictive disorder for some in future.

Even though selfitis is not officially classified as addictive behaviour right now, not in the DSM -5 yet⁵, but there are many real mental disorders that need and deserve treatment, one can get treatment if want.

ABSTRACT

Objective To address that people who feel compelled to continually post pictures of themselves on social media may suffer from a behavioural addiction and therefore may need specialist attention.

Methods Eleven articles were retrieved from electronic databases that met the selection criteria with papers discussed in relation to selfitis and its associative factors.

Results 'Selfitis' is a genuine mental condition and compulsive feelings to continually post pictures of oneself on social media is a red flag hence may need help.

Conclusions Selfie is a mainstay of social media and many people spend time every day taking, perfecting and posting selfies. The rising popularity of selfie, and obsession with taking selfies, sounds like selfitis could be real. Prevention and understanding the risk factors is a key to avoid the significant damage. Sensitization of public can help following protective activities that minimise the problematic behaviour.

KEYWORDS: *Selfitis, Newer, Behavioral, Addiction*

Body of the content:

Selfie

According to Oxford Dictionary, 'Selfie' refers to a self-portrait photography of oneself (or oneself with other people), taken with a camera or a camera phone held at arm's length or pointed at a mirror, which is usually shared through social media².

The word 'Selfie' discussed for the first time by photographer Jim Krause in 2005. Since 2010 selfie has a wide popularity in social media, although the habit of publishing photos on social networks was born in 2000.⁶

Selfitis

Selfitis or a selfie addiction is when a person is almost obsessively taking selfies, several times a day, and posting them to various social media sites like Snapchat, or Facebook, Instagram etc.¹

Incidence¹⁻⁷

- India has the maximum users on Facebook (Simon 2017).
- India accounts for more selfie deaths in the world compared to any other country with 76 deaths reported from a total of 127 worldwide (Lamba et al. 2016).
- More prevalent among the teenagers

Types²⁻⁴

- Borderline - Taking photos of one's self minimum three times a day but not posting on social media.
- Acute - Taking photos of one's minimum three times a day and posting each of them on social media

- Chronic - Uncontrollable urge to take photos of one's self round the clock and posting them on social media more than six times a day,

Underline Causes ²

- Environmental enhancement - Taking selfies gives a good feeling to better enjoy one's environment, express oneself more, provides better memories about the occasion.
- Social competition - Sharing selfies creates healthy competition with friends and colleagues, taking different selfie poses helps increase social status, post frequent selfies to get more 'likes' and comments on social media, use photo editing tools to enhance selfie to look better than others
- Attention seeking - gain enormous attention by sharing selfies on social media, feel more popular, expectation of appreciation from friends.
- Mood modification - reduce stress, makes happy
- Self-confidence - become more positive about self, increase confidence
- Subjective conformity - gain more acceptance among peer group, become a strong member of peer group through posting selfies.

Impact ⁴⁻⁹

- People showing anti-social behavior,
- People suffering from 'selfitis' not really enjoy every good bit of life, because they are busy in clicking, posting, uploading and gathering 'likes' and 'comments' for their selfies.
- Selfie death as they go to any extent to take a selfie, upload it on social media for likes and comments. The uncontrollable urge for popularity and show off drives them to any risky feats. Thus they don't mind in getting to the top of the cliff, middle of a busy road, get themselves trapped in a deep river or sea, climbing top of the building, hanging from a fast running train, even posing with a live ferocious animal.

Selfitis test (Selfitis Behavior Scale)^{2, 3, 10}

Dr. Janarthanan Balakrishnan of Thiagarajar School of Management (TSM), India and Dr. Mark Griffiths, Distinguished Professor of Behavioural Addiction in Nottingham Trent University's Psychology Department have developed the selfitis test.

1. Taking selfies gives me a good feeling to better enjoy my environment
2. Sharing my selfies creates healthy competition with my friends and colleagues
3. I gain enormous attention by sharing my selfies on social media
4. I am able to reduce my stress level by taking selfies
5. I feel confident when I take a selfie
6. I gain more acceptance among my peer group when I take selfie and share it on social media
7. I am able to express myself more in my environment through selfies
8. Taking different selfie poses helps increase my social status
9. I feel more popular when I post my selfies on social media

10. Taking more selfies improves my mood and makes me feel happy
11. I become more positive about myself when I take selfies
12. I become a strong member of my peer group through selfie postings
13. Taking selfies provides better memories about the occasion and the experience
14. I post frequent selfies to get more 'likes' and comments on social media
15. By posting selfies, I expect my friends to appraise me
16. Taking selfies instantly modifies my mood
17. I take more selfies and look at them privately to increase my confidence
18. When I don't take selfies, I feel detached from my peer group
19. I take selfies as trophies for future memories
20. I use photo editing tools to enhance my selfie to look better than others

Scoring: Responses are rated on a 5-point Likert scale. (5 = strongly agree; 4 = Agree; 3 = Neither Agree or Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly Disagree). Scores are summed. The higher the score, the greater the likelihood of Selfitis.

Combating selfitis ¹¹

- Campaign for public awareness and screening for net addiction
- Mental health professionals should explore how an individual uses selfies, social media, and digital communication as an important part of a mental health assessment
- Conducting counselling sessions on self-esteem, body image, healthy relationships and digital safety.
- Gadget-free zones need to be created at homes, learning institutions, public places etc.
- Attempts need to be made at personal and societal levels to regain a healthy balance of life, work, and technology.

Conclusion:

The rapid growth and popularity of Social Networking Sites (SNS) as well as Smartphone has resulted in a new addiction i.e. 'Selfitis'. The present generation is technology-addicted and selfie-obsessed. Usage of selfies and its posting has an impact on the self- presentation of the participants. The feelings of loneliness arise among individuals who spend several hours on SNS waiting for someone to communicate with them. They expressed a strong need for awareness on the negative impacts. Therefore efforts need to be made to educate all regarding how social networking is leading to the culture of "popularity" based on materialism and giving way to unreal standards of physical appearance. Educational programmes can be introduced to identify a healthy and responsible way of using new media to reduce the prevalence of depression and anxiety.

Conflict of Interest:

None.

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None.

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