



## Narcissistic personality and selfie taking behavior among college students

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### Abstract

**Background:** The tendency of taking own pictures through smart phones has turn into an observable fact of new culture of the young generation's resulting in exponential rise in narcissistic features among users. Aim: This study aimed to investigate the narcissistic personality features and selfie taking behavior among college students of Punjab, India.

**Materials and Methods:** Quantitative, descriptive, cross-sectional survey design was used to assess the narcissistic features and selfie taking behavior in 300 conveniently selected college going students of Punjab by using socio-demographic data sheet and Narcissistic personality inventory (NPI 16).

**Findings:** Study found that mean narcissistic score of the college students was 4.44 (2.6) which is at moderate level. 8.4% of the college students fall under the category of severe narcissistic features, 39% of the college students under moderate narcissistic features and 49% of the college students under mild narcissistic features. Narcissistic features had a significant relationship with number of selfies on an average day, preference of act for selfies, edit selfies before posting and untag themselves from group selfies. Posting of selfies on facebook had significant relationship with narcissistic features at p level <0.05.

**Conclusion:** Study concluded that majority of the selfie taking college students had narcissistic symptoms. Health care professional has pivotal role in early screening of internet users and selfie takers so that appropriate measures/ interventions can be planned to prevent psychological symptoms like narcissism in near future.

**Keywords:** narcissism, selfie, college students, selfie taking behavior

### Introduction

Selfies have become enormously popular and it is nearly impossible to visit any social media site without seeing our friends' faces in close-up. Named Word of the Year in 2013 by the Oxford English Dictionary, the term "selfie" has become popular in the vocabulary of nearly every teen and young adult in the technological world. A selfie is defined as "a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smartphone or webcam and shared via social media".<sup>[1]</sup> For the Millennial Generation, the act of taking selfies and overall usage of various social media platforms are an integral part of life. The Millennial Generation's comfort with social platforms has given this specific age group a more positive view of how social media might be affecting their lives. Studies, however, link social media use in young adults to various behavior development issues.<sup>[2]</sup>

People love to take and post their selfies even they are in critical situations or any annoying surroundings. For example, when someone met with an accident, people take pictures, rather than calling ambulance. Nevertheless, they are known or unknown, they just want to click and post it. Certain people are more risk takers to snap more interesting selfies. They choose mountain edges, high waterfalls, treetops, railway lines, with gun etc. They are daring to risk their lives even for simple selfie.<sup>[3]</sup> Research suggests that narcissistic traits increased among college students over generations due to the over usage of social media.<sup>[4]</sup>

Narcissism is an excessive admiration and unrealistic positive

view of oneself and physical appearance. A narcissist has a lack of regard for others and solely concentrates on what benefits them.<sup>[5]</sup> Recent studies have suggested that posting selfies on social networking sites has correlated with self-reporting narcissism in young males<sup>[6]</sup>. In addition, Carpenter (2012)<sup>[7]</sup> found that the excessive use of sharing photographs, statuses and friends in self-promotion correlated with narcissist tendencies using the Narcissistic Personality Inventory scale.

Wickel<sup>[8]</sup> in his study reported that 55% of participants believed that narcissistic behaviours are rising due to posting selfies on the Internet. Bergman<sup>[9]</sup> found that individuals who scored higher on narcissist traits post more photos on social networking sites.

Selfies became a very interesting topic for researchers to study and examine because since 2012, the rate of usage of selfie increased by 17,000%.<sup>[10]</sup> Certain studies have reported selfie taking being linked to psychopathologies such as grandiosity, narcissism, and body dysmorphic disorder.<sup>[4]</sup> This research aims to investigate the narcissistic personality features among selfie taking college students of Punjab, India and its association with selfie taking behaviour. Since most research only tackles on narcissism and social networking sites usage, the researchers wish to concentrate specifically on selfie behavior and narcissism

### Materials and Methods

Quantitative, descriptive, cross-sectional survey design was

used to assess the narcissistic personality features among selfie taking 300 conveniently selected college students (17-30) from six degree colleges of Punjab. Students who had access to a smart phone use and clicking selfies on regular basis were included in the study. Following research tools were used in the study:

### Tool 1. Socio- demographic data sheet

It is used to measure socio-demographic details of the college student. It has 11 items structured questionnaire which were age, gender, religion, background, family type, marital status, family income, pocket money, programme, class and years of formal education. Administration time for this tool was 2-3 minutes. The reliability was established through test retest method ( $r=0.9$ ).

### Tool 2. Selfie taking behavior questionnaire

Selfie taking behavior questionnaire was used to measure the selfie taking behavior of college students. Part A of the tool contained 5 items related to frequency and nature of selfies and part B contained 6 items related to rationale and process of selfie taking. The items included in frequency and nature of selfies are clicked selfies or not, number of selfies on an average day, type of shot preferred, preference of selfies and dominant emotion while clicking selfies. The items included in rationale and process of selfie taking are reason for clicking selfies, upload selfies on social networking sites, preference of act for selfies, preference of social networking sites, edit selfies before posting them and untag themselves from group selfies if not looking best. The reliability was established through test retest method ( $r=0.86$ ).

### Tool 3. Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI 16)

Narcissistic Personality inventory (NPI 16) was developed by Ames *et al* (2006) [11] and used in this stud to measure narcissism of college students. It include 16 pair of statements and the one that comes closest to feelings and beliefs about oneself should be selected. Maximum possible score is 16 and minimum possible score is 0. The obtained scores were categorized in five categories: Non narcissistic features (0 score), mild narcissistic features (score range 1-4), moderate narcissistic features (score range 5-8), severe narcissistic features (score range 9-12) and very severe narcissistic

features (score range 13-16). Total administration time for this tool was approximately 7-8 minutes. For present study reliability was determined by test retest method which was 0.8.

Content validity of the Socio-demographic data sheet, Selfie taking behavior questionnaire and Narcissistic Personality inventory (NPI 16) was established by experts from psychiatry.

The administrative approval was taken from the concerned college authorities after explaining in detail the need for the study along with its objectives. A written informed consent was obtained. All the scales were administered in a individual or group setting in one session itself. The researcher was present during the session and any queries while answering the questions were attended. The study protocol was approved by ethical committee of the Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot and University College of Nursing, Faridkot. Data were collected in English Language based on the participant's preference. The estimated time for the completion of the questionnaires was about 10-15 minutes. Response rate was very high.

Appropriate descriptive and inferential statistics was used to analyze data through SPSS (21) software.  $p$  value  $<0.05$  was considered as level of significance.

### Results

Mean age of the college student was  $20.74 \pm 1.91$  years. Maximum college students were women (89.7%), Sikh (72.3%) and belonged to rural area (55.7%) having mean family income and pocket money Rs.  $47550 \pm 62149.79$  and  $1738 \pm 1606.16$ , respectively. They were single (97.3%), living in nuclear family (70.3%) and studying in under graduation program (95.3%).

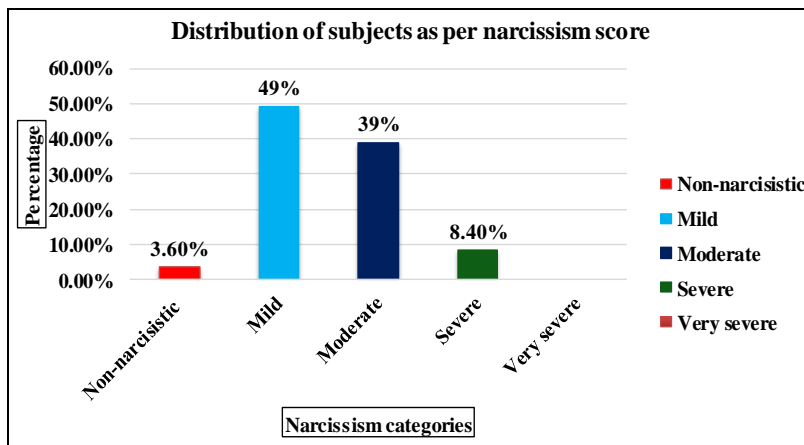
A 5.3% of the college students were taking  $>15$  number of selfies per day and preferred to took selfies with their friends (41.3%). Nearly two third (64.66%) of college students preferred group selfies with joy as dominant emotion (90.3%). Having love clicking themselves was the most preferred reason for clicking selfies (39%). More than two third (70%) of college students upload selfies on social sites preferably on Whatsapp (77.3%), More than half (60%) of college students sometimes edit their selfies before posting them and 44.5% of college students never untag themselves from group selfie.

**Table 1:** Mean (SD) of narcissism of college students (N=300)

Variable	Minimum to maximum possible score	Mean (SD)	Maximum obtained score	Minimum obtained score
Narcissism	0-16	4.44 (2.6)	12	0

Table 1 depicts that mean (SD) of narcissistic score was 4.44 (2.6) for the college students with range of 0-12. Hence it can

be concluded that college students had non narcissistic features as the mean is below the middle point of score.



**Fig 1:** Frequency (%) distribution of college students as per Narcissism score

Figure 1 shows that 8.4% of the college students fall under the category of severe narcissistic features, 39% of the college students under moderate narcissistic features and 49% of the college students under mild narcissistic features. Only 3.6% of the college students had non narcissistic features. Hence it can be concluded that majority of the college students had narcissistic features whether mild, moderate or severe which may be a warning sign.

Table 2 and 3 revealed that narcissism has significant relationship with number of selfies on an average day, preference of act for selfies and edit selfies before posting. College students who click more selfies and uploading them on social networking sites had more narcissism symptoms. College students who were editing selfies before posting had more narcissism symptoms.

**Table 2:** Relationship of narcissism with selfie taking behavior among college students (N=300)

Selfie taking behavior		Mean±SD	F/t value	p value	
Number of selfies on an average day	0-5	4.17±2.67	5.191*	0.002	
	6-10	5.07±2.47			
	11-15	7±1.56			
	>15	5.06±1.94			
Type of shot prefer	Head/face shot	4.41±2.65	2.65 <sup>NS</sup>	0.892	
	With your surroundings	4.18±2.72			
	Body shot	5.11±3.10			
	With your friends	4.45±2.55			
Preference of selfies	Group selfies	4.54±2.59	0.931 <sup>NS</sup>	0.353	
	Individual selfies	4.25±2.73			
Dominant emotion in most of selfies	Anger	5.22±2.22	0.838 <sup>NS</sup>	0.502	
	Joy	4.38±2.67			
	Sadness	5.14±1.95			
	Surprise	5.71±3.03			
	Other	3.83±1.94			
Reason for clicking selfies	Due to boredom	No	4.66±2.64	3.626*	0.000
		Yes	3.11±2.28		
	To message or upload it	No	4.46±2.58	0.192 <sup>NS</sup>	0.848
		Yes	4.39±2.81		
	Peer pressure	No	4.43±2.67	-0.132 <sup>NS</sup>	0.895
		Yes	4.53±2.02		
	To boost my confidence	No	4.46±2.67	0.462 <sup>NS</sup>	0.644
		Yes	4.24±2.41		
	To attract attention	No	4.37±2.64	-2.165 *	0.031
		Yes	5.92±2.64		
	The band wagon effect	No	4.41±2.64	-1.329 <sup>NS</sup>	0.185
		Yes	6±2.73		
	I love clicking myself	No	4.24±2.69	-1.666 <sup>NS</sup>	0.097
		Yes	4.76±2.53		
	To get compliments	No	4.41±2.62	-0.640 <sup>NS</sup>	0.523
		Yes	4.78±2.96		
Others	No	4.50±2.68	1.422 <sup>NS</sup>	0.083	
	Yes	3.70±2.03			

NS= Non significant, \* = Significant

**Table 3:** Relationship of narcissism with selfie taking behavior among college students (N=300)

Selfie taking behavior		Mean±SD	F/t value	p value	
Upload selfies on social sites	Yes	4.53±2.74	0.948 <sup>NS</sup>	0.344	
	No	4.22±2.38			
Preference of act for selfies	Posting on social sites	5.35±2.46	6.382*	0.002	
	Send through instant messaging app	4.30±2.31			
	Keep as personal collection	4.10±2.68			
Social networking site preference	Whatsapp	No	4.83±2.68	1.407 <sup>NS</sup>	0.160
		Yes	4.32±2.63		
	Instagram	No	4.37±2.72	-0.742 <sup>NS</sup>	0.459
		Yes	4.63±2.40		
	Snapchat	No	4.40±2.66	-1.060 <sup>NS</sup>	0.290
		Yes	5.12±2.30		
	Facebook	No	4.34±2.65	-2.065*	0.040
		Yes	5.46±2.31		
Others	No	4.44± 2.62	0.159 <sup>NS</sup>	0.874	
	Yes	4.28±3.77			
Edit selfies before posting	Yes	5.65±2.55	6.883*	0.001	
	Sometimes	4.07±2.53			
	No	4.58±2.74			
Untag themselves from a group selfie if not looking best	Yes	5.01±2.77	2.465 <sup>NS</sup>	0.087	
	Sometimes	4.09±2.34			
	No	4.43±2.75			

NS= Non significant, \* = Significant

## Discussion

This study, being one of the few in Punjab (India) with regard to selfie-taking among college students, brought some interesting findings.

Present study found that a 5.3% of the college students were taking >15 number of selfies per day and preferred to take selfies with their friends (41.3%). More than two third (70%) of college students upload selfies on social sites preferably on Whatsapp (77.3%). These finding are in line with a study conducted by Dutta *et al* <sup>[12]</sup> who reported that (41.3%) clicked 0–2 selfies in a day while 33.3% clicked more than 4 selfies/day, (27.4%) of the population clicked more than 10 selfies a week. Hingerton <sup>[13]</sup> also reported that 56.10% subjects post their selfies on social sites after editing.

In this study, it was found that 8.4% of the college students had severe narcissistic features, 39% of the college students had moderate narcissistic features and 49% of the college students had mild narcissistic features. This finding is consistent with Bergman *et al* <sup>[9]</sup> who found that individuals who scored higher on narcissist traits post more photos on social networking sites.

In the present study, college students reported that they like to click shot with friends (41.3%), followed by head/face selfies (38.3%), followed by with their surroundings (14.3%) and only 6% of the college students took body shot selfies. These findings were supported by Saroshe <sup>[14]</sup> who reported that 20% responded with family, 68% said with friends, 1% with buildings, 4% with animals, 2% with cars, and 5% responded none of the above.

Majority (70%) of college students upload selfies which are perfect, whereas 30% of the college students do not prefer to upload selfies. These findings were supported by Hingerton <sup>[13]</sup> reported that 56.10% of the 82 subjects post their selfies and 43.90% of the participants did not post their selfies. Veena *et al* <sup>[15]</sup> and Gill <sup>[16]</sup> also reported the similar findings. This study revealed that narcissism has significant relationship

with number of selfies on an average day, preference of act for selfies and edit selfies before posting. College students who click more selfies and uploading them on social networking sites had more narcissism symptoms. College students who were editing selfies before posting had more narcissism symptoms. Similarly findings were reported by Amurao *et al* <sup>[17]</sup> that there is a positive linear correlation between selfie behavior and the narcissism among females with  $r = 0.84$  significant at  $p < 0.01$ .

## Conclusion

Study concluded that majority of the college students who were taking selfies with their smart phones and were uploading them on social networking sties preferably on Whatsapp after editing them had more narcissism symptoms. Majority of the college students had narcissistic features from mild to severe which may be a warning sign. This study gives an insight into the youth's viewpoint towards selfies and narcissism.

Study recommends that early screening followed by appropriate interventions are required for selfie takers to avoid psychological and physical problems in future. Behavioral addictions such as selfies need more focused research in the future. The results are expected to help in designing policies and making plans regarding awareness programme for safe ways of clicking selfies and to treat smartphone addiction.

Despite the interesting findings, some research limitations need to be mentioned. First, the data were collected through self report method and researcher had to trust on the response of college students. As cross-sectional data were used in the analysis, causal relationships cannot be inferred. Thus, a study that employs longitudinal data collection will be required to address this issue. Data were only collected from a student sample from a single city. This can limit the generalizability of the findings to a larger population.

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### Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests with any organization regarding the materials discussed in this manuscript.

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