

SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF SELFIE CULTURE IN INDIA

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Abstract: *A Selfie culture in India is a new phenomenon of reflection of the country's changing social and cultural landscape, as well as the increasing importance of technology and social media in daily life. Selfies are very popular in India, and people of all ages, genders, and socio-economic backgrounds are likely to take and share selfies.*

Selfies in India are often used to document events and experiences, showcase personal style, and as a form of self-expression. The trend towards taking and sharing selfies can be seen as a way for people to assert their individuality and identity within a larger social group, and to connect with others and build relationships.

The selfie culture phenomenon is observable across all demographics in India which shapes the socio-cultural priorities and increasing individualism and self-expressionism. It is essential to take precautions to avoid tragic incidences while taking selfies.

Key Words: *Selfie Culture, Selfitis, Social Media, Digital technology, Ubiquitous, Narcissism, Individualism, Sociological Perspective, Self-esteem, and Self-portraiture.*

1. INTRODUCTION :

Over the past few years, it becomes a popular trend of clicking and posting selfies in social media. It has become a symbol of self-expression and often people portray their photographic skills and adventurous postures. Selfie “is the word of 2013. Oxford dictionary defined as “a photo of yourself that you take, typically with a Smartphone or webcam and usually put on social media” The phenomenon “selfitis” emerged especially among youth which can be denoted as ‘an obsessive and compulsive desire to take photos of one and post them on social media. 2014 was declared the year of the selfie by Twitter. 21st June is the national selfie day and the next day is celebrated as international selfie day (22nd June) from 2019. It has made a revolutionary mark among Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat users in social media (Mike, 2014; Lim, 2016; Piwek and Joinson, 2016).

Around 4% of the total photos taken are selfies which is around 92 million (according to Photutorials Data) taken daily in 2022 out of 2.3 billion photos clicked every day. However there is a variance in the number by different sources of reporting.

According Cisco study India to have over 800 million Smartphone users by 2022. Smart phones will account for 44 % of internet traffic. The selfie culture credit should go to smartphones.

4% of all photos taken are selfies. 18-to-24-year-olds reported that one in three photos they take is a selfie, while some confessed to taking more than 8 selfies daily. Individuals spend 54 hours a year (or 7 minutes a day) taking selfies. People smile in 60% of selfies. An average “selfie-taker” is 24 years old. Over 50% of millennial have published a selfie at least once. Over 95% of young adults have taken a selfie Women take 1.5 times more selfies than men. Besides selfies, the most common themes are photos of cats, food, cars, houses, feet, other people, shoes, food, friends, rooms, artwork, dogs, and monuments.(source: Photutorial.com)

24 billion selfies were uploaded to Google photos. On Instagram the 280 million public selfie posts are thrown. In addition to this many selfies posted on Facebook and other social media platform and sharing many selfies through whatsapp .

Selfie culture has a relatively recent history, with the term "selfie" first appearing in an Australian online forum in 2002. However, the concept of taking self-portraits has existed for much longer. Self-portraits have been created by artists for centuries, and the use of cameras for self-portraiture has been around since the invention of the camera in the early 19th century. Preset timer for self photos and group photos are in use before the smart phone emergence. However the present context is in reference to the modern selfies that are popularized through the advent of front cameras in

Smartphone and it has emerged as a trend across all sections especially in the occasions, festivals and tours and travel. The travels where the selfies are common photographic clicks. Selfies have gained popularity from 2014. In 2010, the iPhone 4 was the first smart phone with a selfie camera.

In the early 21st century, the widespread adoption of Smartphone cameras and the rise of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat have greatly popularized the practice of taking selfies. Today, the term "selfie" is widely recognized and used around the world and among every strata of our society.

The term selfie is no more a novel and nor any more a fad, the selfie taking has become a habitual practice for many especially for youth. Besides the selfie evolved with new terminologies such as pelfie (pet selfie), belfie (butt selfie), drelfie (drunk selfie), helfie (hair selfie), Shelfie (books shelf picture), welfie (work out selfie), usie or groufie (group selfies), and so on and some others to come to increase the list of terminologies. In addition to this selfie points in various places that add to the fuel to increasing selfie movement.

1.1 A few prominent selfies

The popular MC turned social media sensation; Cline Varghese delights in sharing his travelogues he takes with his fans as he takes his music and his humor for a tour of India (Culture trip by Gayatri Sapru). He explained that his travel show with MTV's "Selfie Challenge" in which he takes selfies with people across India. This show winning with a massive 25 million plus votes and he is nicknamed as 'Selfie King'.

1. By far, the most dangerous selfie ever taken was by a group of Indians near the edge of a mountain cliff. It has even become famous and was called 'Killfie'.
2. Russian Photographer Angela Nikolau: She is famous for taking dangerous selfies on top of skyscrapers and on edges of high-rise buildings.
3. The Brazilian tourism board actually challenged travel blogger and photographer Lee Thompson to take the selfie from the top of Rio's Christ the Redeemer statue. He did and, thankfully, survived to tell the tale. (Source: photutorial)
4. In the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, a selfie was taken during the meet with Prime Minister Sri Narendra Modi along with Bollywood actors like Ranveer Singh, Alia Bhat, Shah Rukh Khan, Kangana Ranaut, Ekta Kapoor, and the selfie of the same was also shared by Karan Johar on Instagram.
5. When Joe Biden took a selfie in the car with Obama he laughed and said that this selfie would also give one more opportunity to internet to chat about their bromance. The duo's picture bagged the prize for the 'Most Powerful Presidential Selfie'. (Source: By Divyatakur's Monomousumi September 30, 2022)
6. Host and comedian Ellen DeGeneres posted the most-shared selfie in Twitter's history on March 2014's Oscar ceremony, with 3.4 million re-tweets and 2.4 million likes. (Source: Monomousimi- by Divya Takur)

2. Review of Literature and related studies

Various online articles have been reviewed and referred the books related to the selfie culture. There have been numerous studies on the culture of selfies and the ways in which they are used for self-expression and communication.

1. A sociological perspective of selfies by Nishant Malpani (2019), in his blog post in Digital Sociology, he emphasized how the selfies impacting various sociological abstractions. He has chosen the theme and the respective abstractions that are associated with Selfies. Such as Selfie as technology, social relationship as self, social spaces as human cognition, concepts as presumption and social institution as economy. Questions are raised and analyzed using the chosen technology for each abstraction.
2. Being on Trend, Selfie as a social phenomenon by Ekaterena Orek and Elena Bogomiyakova (2017). This article analyses selfie as a social phenomenon.. It is suggested that selfie be viewed as a social practice that maintains an individual's social Identity.
3. Can selfies trigger social anxiety? A study on the relationship between social media selfie behavior and social anxiety in Chinese youth group by Yixuan Liu, Jiyayu Zhu and Jianping He (2022): The purpose of this study is to investigate the current situation of selfie behavior, body image, and social anxiety among young people in China. It was found that there is a significant negative relationship between youth social media selfie behavior and social anxiety, while sequence of mediating social comparison and body image are significant. The findings provide new ideas and ways to explore the intervention paths of youth social psychology and image socialization.
4. Exploring Factors behind Offline and Online Selfie Popularity among Youth in India by Sanchita Srivatsav, Puja Upadhyaya, Shruti Sharma and Kaveri Gupta (2018). The study explores to address the gap between offline and online selfies and explored to address the two different behaviours. It emphasized the significance of understanding the user's conception of selfie and second, it explored the determining factors behind both offline (taking) and online (posting) modes of the practice. The study results showed that the offline theme and identified five factors i.e. at the time of taking the selfie (looks good, Keeping memories, mood driven, mirroring the self and posting on social media). On the online

side three factors are identified for selfie popularity .These are (social approval, being the best among the rest and to maintain online presence). The study also extend the existing conceptualization of selfie culture and to unravel its wide popularity

5.Exploring Selfie phenomenon: The idea of Self-preservation and its implications among young women by Amy J.Nguyen.(Smith Scholar works) This study is to explore how female users identifying the act of uploading the selfies as an expression of external affirmation and an act of empowerment in terms of redefining beauty standards that are reinforced in Society . In addition to provide a foundation for understanding the selfie phenomenon and its relationship to perceived sense of self-worth in young women from the usage of Instagram

6. The Selfie Paradox: Nobody Seems to Like Them Yet Everyone Has Reasons to Take Them. An Exploration of Psychological Functions of Selfies in Self-Presentation by Sarah Defen Bach and Lara Christoporakos. (2017)- The study findings outline selfies as a complex and somewhat conflicting practice, with less general agreement than the wide dissemination of selfies in social media may suggest. Participants' reports on their own selfie-taking behavior showed that a considerable part of participants was regularly taking selfies, however, with different levels of positive affect related to it. Further analysis revealed that the experienced positivity while taking selfies differed depending on individually preferred self-presentation strategies. In line with our expectations, particularly participants who habitually use self-promotion and/or self-disclosure as strategies of self-presentation appeared as the most passionate about selfies. For them, selfies may form a welcome opportunity for supporting their naturally preferred self-presentational behavior.

7. The Sociology of Selfies (2020) by Mansoor Ahmed, This study highlighted how the selfie phenomenon perceived differently in various cultures and societies. The results show that factors such as religion, sex, customs and geopolitical situations affect the space-time, distribution selfies around the world. The tendency of taking own pictures turn into an observable fact of the new culture of the society.. There are notable differences between women and men present themselves online. These differences reflect the traditional values of how women and men present themselves in the society. There are positive facets of selfies, but addiction selfies leads to negative and health problems especially among youth. In conclusion the study reveals that the time has come to create awareness about the negative consequences of selfies right from the school to the community and society level.

8. Selfies a boon or bane by Agam Bansal et al (2018): This Study aims to assess the epidemiology of selfie related deaths. They notice 279 selfie deaths occurred during 2011 to 2017. 72 % deaths occurred in males and while the rest are females. India topped in selfie deaths. Risky behavior has caused more deaths than non-risky behavior. They concluded that 'NO Selfie Zones "should be declared for tourists in the places of water bodies, tall buildings and mountain peaks etc.

9. Welcome to Selfiestan by Stephen Monterio (2019), Identity and the networked gaze in Indian Mobile media; The study concluded that Selfie culture in India appears to be a particularly rich area for exploring the inflection of contemporary communication technologies with traditional beliefs and practices of the self, identity, and subjectivity, this article has explored potential correspondences and intersections between the successful marketing of smartphones in India as specifically 'selfie phones',

Overall, these studies highlight the unique cultural and social factors that have shaped selfie culture in India, and the ways in which it is influenced by social media and technology. They also demonstrate the potential impacts of selfies on identity, self-perception, and social relationships

3. Sociological perspective of Selfie culture in India :

Fading away from the industrial society, we live in the age of networked society where in the social structure is made up of networks powered by digital and communication technologies. It metamorphoses into the whole society with a smartphone dominance in which the day starts with messaging and communicating in social media. The social fabric is full of microelectronic based ICT which paved the way for the emergence of selfies which are double edged with a concept of prosumption. (The selfie producer is the first consumer). The change in the societal base due to the emergence of digital technology, the super built social institutions subject to reframe themselves.

Ubiquitous on social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Tumbler, flicker the selfie has become a powerful means for self-expression and style encouraging its makers to share the most intimate and private moments of their lives – as well as engage in a form of creative self-fashioning

The sociological perspective on selfie culture provides a rich and nuanced view of the ways in which people use selfies to construct and present their identities, communicate with others, and engage with larger cultural and societal issues. Selfie culture can provide insights into contemporary social and cultural trends, as well as the ways in which technology and media shape our self-perception and relationships with others

Selfies can be seen as a reflection of the values, beliefs, and culture of a society. In India, the popularity of selfies can be seen as a reflection of the importance that people place on self-presentation and self-expression.

The sociology of selfie culture refers to the study of the social and cultural implications of the act of taking and sharing selfies, which has become increasingly prevalent with the widespread adoption of social media and Smartphone technology. Researchers in this field may explore the motivations behind selfie-taking behavior, the ways in which selfies are used to construct and perform identity, and the impact of selfie culture on issues such as body image and self-esteem. Some researchers have argued that selfies can be seen as a reflection of a broader cultural shift towards individualism and a focus on the self, and that they can serve as a means of promoting and constructing a desired identity or persona. Others have examined the way in which selfies can be used to promote a sense of community and connection through social media, and the way in which they can be used to document and share personal experiences and memories. However, there are also potential negative consequences of selfie culture, such as the pressure to present an idealized or unrealistic image of oneself, or the potential for self-objectification and the internalization of harmful beauty standards. Some research has also suggested that excessive selfie-taking and sharing may be related to narcissistic tendencies or low self-esteem. The sociology of selfie culture is a complex and multifaceted field of study that involves examining the social and cultural impacts of a ubiquitous aspect of modern life. On the one hand, selfies can be seen as a way for individuals to express their identity and connect with others through social media. On the other hand, there is concern that the emphasis on self-presentation in selfie culture can lead to a focus on the self at the expense of genuine social connection and community.

Another area of interest in the sociology of selfie culture is the way in which the taking and sharing of selfies is shaped by gender, race, and other forms of social identity. For example, that there are significant differences in the way that men and women take and present themselves in selfies, and that these differences are influenced by societal expectations and norms around gender.

Research on the sociology of selfie culture has also explored the broader social and cultural implications of the proliferation of selfies, such as the ways in which they may contribute to the construction and performance of identity, the impact of social media on communication and relationships, and the potential consequences of the increasing focus on the self in contemporary society.

Some key themes that have been explored in the sociology of selfie culture include:

- **Identity:** Selfies are often seen as a way for people to present and construct their identity, both online and offline..
- **Social media:** Selfies are closely linked to social media platforms, which have become an important part of many people's social lives. Researchers have studied how people use selfies to engage with friends and followers online, and how they may be influenced by factors such as likes, comments, and other forms of social feedback.
- **Gender:** Gender influences selfie culture, including the ways in which femininity and masculinity are performed and represented through selfies. This includes examining the ways in which body image and attractiveness are constructed through selfie culture, and how these may be shaped by cultural norms and expectations.
- **Celebrity:** Selfies have also been studied in relation to celebrity culture, as celebrities often use selfies to connect with their fans and promote their public image. Researchers have examined the ways in which celebrities use selfies to craft their public persona, and the ways in which their fans may be influenced by this.
- **Social norms:** researchers have also looked at the way in which selfie culture is shaped by social norms and expectations, including issues of privacy, consent, and appropriate behavior. This includes examining the ways in which people may be judged or stigmatized for their selfie-taking behavior, and how this may vary across different cultural contexts.
- **Narcissism and individualism:** There has been a lot of debate about whether selfie culture is a reflection of increased narcissism or individualism in society, and research has examined the relationship between selfie-taking behavior and these psychological traits.
- **Empowerment and agency:** Some research has focused on the ways in which selfies can be used as a means of empowerment and self-expression, particularly for marginalized or underrepresented groups.

Further people expecting likes and comments on their posts. Prof.Lakshmi AK explains that how the number of likes and comments and shares are the social currency for the youth. The social media etiquette demands appreciation in the form of likes and comments of the posts.

4. Selfie trends in India :

The amazing land of India with wealth of ancient and medieval architecture, exquisite palaces gleam and spark on waters of majestic rivers. Where the beauties modestly walk through the temple corridors with their vibrant clothing wafting with fragrance of perfumes or ornate devour and where monkeys play amongst statues of ancient gods on one side and on the other side filled with crowded streets and modernity, the selfie craze has hit India. Like a nation of Kardashians and Biebers, 21st-century Indians love taking selfies.

Selfies have become a popular way for people in India to share their daily lives and connect with others online. There are a number of trends and patterns in the way that selfies are used in India, which are shaped by social, cultural, and economic factors.

One trend in India is the use of selfies to document and celebrate special occasions, such as weddings, birthdays, festivals and holidays. Selfies are also commonly used to share travel experiences and to showcase cultural and natural attractions in India. Also youth prefer to display their self-portraiture in an adventurous ways for which they choose risky places and spots

Social media: The proliferation of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat has made it easier for people in India to take and share selfies with friends and followers. These platforms have also helped to create new forms of social interaction and self-presentation through the use of hash tags, filters, and other features. Various features associated with selfie culture include:

- Selfies at landmarks: India is home to many iconic landmarks and tourists attractions, including the Taj Mahal and the Gateway of India, and it is common for people to take selfies at these locations.
- Selfies with pets: Pets, especially dogs and cats, are popular in India, and it is common for people to take selfies with their pets.
- Selfies with food: Food is an important part of Indian culture, and many people enjoy taking selfies with their meals or at restaurants. These are selfies taken with a plate of food in the background, and are often used to show off the delicious meals being enjoyed
- Group selfies: These are selfies taken with a group of friends or family, and are often shared on social media to show off the close relationships and fun times had together. It is common for people in India to take group selfies with friends and family, often at special events or during outings.
- Couple selfies: These are selfies taken by couples, and are often romantic or playful in nature. They are often shared on social media to show off the couple's love and affection for each other.
- Travel selfies: These are selfies taken while traveling, and are often used to document the sights and experiences of the trip.
- Fitness selfies: These are selfies taken while working out or participating in fitness activities, and are often used to show off progress or motivate others to stay active.
- One trend is the use of selfies to document events and experiences. For example, many people in India take selfies at weddings, parties, and other social events, and share these photos on social media platforms.
- Hand mouthing selfies: It is posture by keeping one hand side of the mouth. Celebrities especially females prefers this selfie.

5. Selfie culture and Demographics in India

Selfies are very popular in India and are taken and shared by people of all ages and demographics. However, it is likely that younger people are more likely to take and share selfies, as they are more likely to be active on social media and to have access to smartphone's and other devices that make it easy to take and share photos. It is likely that the popularity of selfies crosses many demographic boundaries and is enjoyed by people of all ages, genders, and socio-economic backgrounds in India.

In terms of gender, both men and women in India take and share selfies, and the trend towards taking and sharing selfies is likely to be fairly evenly distributed across genders.

It is also likely that people of all socio-economic backgrounds in India take and share selfies, as Smartphone's and cameras are widely available and affordable, making it possible for people from all walks of life to participate in this trend.

Selfies are popular among people of all ages in India. However, research has shown that younger people are more likely to take and share selfies than older people. A survey conducted in India in 2016 found that 89% of people aged 18-24 reported taking selfies, compared to 71% of people aged 25-34 and just 43% of people aged 35-44.

Selfies are also more popular among women than men in India. A study conducted in 2017 found that 75% of women in India reported taking selfies, compared to just 65% of men.

In terms of social media use, research has shown that people in India are more likely to share selfies on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. Overall, the popularity of selfies in India reflects the country's diverse population and the many different ways in which people use technology and social media to connect with others and share their lives.

6. Selfie culture and Social Change :

Selfie culture has had a significant impact on social change in India.

One way that selfie culture has contributed to social change in India is by providing a platform for people to share their experiences and perspectives with a wider audience. Selfies allow people to document and share their daily lives, and can be used to highlight social and cultural issues. Selfie culture has also contributed to changes in how people present themselves and their identities.

In addition, the trend of taking and sharing selfies has also led to changes in the way people interact with each other and the places they visit. For example, people may be more focused on taking and sharing selfies at events or tourist attractions, rather than fully engaging with their surroundings or the people around them. Some of the ways in which selfie culture has influenced social change in India include:

Increased self-expression and visibility: Selfies allow people to share their experiences and perspectives with a wider audience, which can contribute to increased self-expression and visibility for certain groups of people.

7. The consequences of Selfie culture in India :

On the positive side, selfies can be a way for people to document their lives, share experiences with others, and connect with friends and family. They can also be a way for people to express themselves and showcase their personal style. Selfies can also be a form of self-expression and a way for people to assert their individuality and identity.

There are also potential negative consequences associated with the trend towards taking and sharing selfies in India. For example, The trend towards taking and sharing selfies may also distract people from more meaningful activities or relationships.

An over-emphasis on appearance: The trend towards taking and sharing selfies may place an undue emphasis on appearance, leading people to focus on their appearance to the exclusion of other important aspects of their lives.

Tragic incidents

It is tragic when anyone loses their life while taking a selfie. Reports suggest that India has one of the highest rates of "selfie deaths" in the world, with at least 259 reported deaths between 2011 to 2017 and out of these 159 deaths took place in India.

8. CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, selfie culture in India is a widespread and important aspect of social and cultural life in the country. Selfies are popular among people of all ages and are used for a variety of purposes, including documenting events and experiences, showcasing personal style, and expressing oneself. Selfie culture is a significant and influential aspect of modern life in India.

The trend towards taking and sharing selfies in India is likely influenced by a combination of factors, including cultural, technological, and social factors.

While it is possible that issues of narcissism and self-image may be related to the popularity of selfies in India, it is important to recognize that the trend towards taking and sharing selfies is a multifaceted phenomenon that is influenced by many different factors. Ultimately, the nature of selfie culture in India is highly personal and varies widely depending on the individual taking the photograph and the context in which it is taken. It is essential to take precautions to avoid tragic incidence while taking selfies.

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