

Selfie Phenomenon: Its Implications to Self-Esteem and Body Image Satisfaction

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Abstract:

The rapid increase of popular social networking sites (SNSs) over the past few years is linked to the occurrence of a new psychological and collective phenomenon – “Selfie.” Selfies are self-portraits, commonly taken with a camera or mobile phone held at arm's length, which is said have implications for one's self-esteem and body image satisfaction. Hence, this study investigated the impact of the selfie behavior of senior high school students to their self-esteem and body image satisfaction. Data for this descriptive research were obtained through proportionate simple random sampling with 133 senior high school students from the academic track as the primary respondents of the study. Significant findings of the research include the following: (1) students have high self-esteem and are satisfied with their body image, (2) selfie behavior does not have a significant relationship with self-esteem, (3) the frequency of selfie-taking and posting does not significantly relate to body image satisfaction, (4) students' perception of selfie-taking and posting is positively correlated with their body image satisfaction. It was then concluded that the students' body image satisfaction increases as they become more conscious of their selfie behavior.

Key Words: Body Image Satisfaction, Self-esteem, Selfie

Introduction

The use of popular social networking sites (SNSs), such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, has increased rapidly over the past few years (Biolcati & Cani, 2015). Its emergence links to the occurrence of a new psychological and collective phenomenon wherein people tend to upload their photographs in these sites. Researchers refer to this phenomenon as "Selfie" (Pandey & Mishra, 2016). Studies have defined selfie as a self-portrait photograph, commonly taken with a camera or mobile phone held at arm's length or supported by a selfie stick. The popularity of selfies has skyrocketed, and it is nearly impossible to visit any social media site without seeing someone else's face in close-up. The phenomenon of the selfie was so widespread in 2013 that Oxford Dictionary selected the term as the "word of 2013" (Snooke, 2014).

Selfie-posting has caught a great deal of attention from newspapers and the academic world since 2011 (Sung, Lee, Kim, & Choi, 2016). It has spurred discussions among researchers about the underlying psychological motivations behind selfie-posting behavior to understand better its fundamental mechanisms (Biolcati & Passini, 2017). Scholars generally agree that selfie-posting practice symbolizes a relatively new but dominant method of self-presentation online (Sung et

al., 2016). According to Haggard (2014), selfie-takers believe self-imaging is a way to validate and express themselves. However, other researches are proposing that being highly involved in the trend has specific implications on their self-esteem and body image satisfaction (Haggard, 2014; Ablooshi, 2015).

Self-esteem is the overall subjective emotional evaluation of the students who engage in a selfie behavior's self-worth. Selfies cause people to gain self-confidence and stay optimistic. The pressure to be "camera-ready" can also increase self-esteem issues and build up a feeling of competition among friends if a person posts a selfie picture on social media and gets only fewer likes. The person may feel ugly or embarrassed and may want to remove their displayed image. However, if a person posts a selfie picture and get an enormous amount of likes, it makes them feel competent and confident (Isuan, 2015). Accordingly, Oswald's (2018) article entitled "Why Self-Esteem is Important and Its Dimensions," found that when an individual has high self-esteem, they will be able to know themselves with values and self-worth.

Body image is the perception of an individual about their overall physical appearance. There has been considerable emphasis on body image and appearance portrayed by the media, and such pressures would suggest concern in most people. These 'ideals' consists of unrealistic views of thin bodies for women and muscular torsos for men, which are causing significant concerns for health as this epidemic has caused an increase in eating disorders (Hingerton, 2016).

In Gingoog City Comprehensive National High School, the majority of the students are exposed to social networking sites, and as a result, taking and posting portraits of themselves is inevitable as it has become a way of their self-presentation in the said platforms. Looking into the implications of selfie behavior to the self-esteem and body image satisfaction of the students would prove essential in providing grounds in evaluating their psychological functioning and well-being. Furthermore, various researches regarding this topic exhibited inconsistencies in their results (Hingerton, 2016; Krishna & Krishna, 2017; Campbell, 2016; Shin, Kim, Im, & Chong, 2017; Biolcati & Passini, 2018; Isuan, 2015).

Taking this perspective into consideration, the researchers designed the present study to elucidate the implications of the selfie behavior to the self-esteem and body image satisfaction of students. This study also aimed to investigate whether males and females vary in their selfie behavior, self-esteem, and body image satisfaction.

Review of Literature

Cooley's (1902) Looking- Glass Self Theory, which he introduced in his book entitled "Human Nature and the Social Order," states that an individual's self is created from the concepts and ideas that other people have about them. His theory asserts that we learn about who we are from people around us and from our ideas of how others perceive us. According to this theory, one goes through three stages as they begin to look at themselves and imagine how they appear to

other people: First, they picture the way they seem to other people (e.g., as intelligent, successful, or strong). Second, they develop that image along with the things that they already do (e.g., the clothes worn, groups they belonged, or sports played.) Lastly, the third stage is where people combine the first two stages to come up with an image of how they want others to see them.

Swann's (1983) Self-Verification Theory is a social psychological theory that suggests that people seek verification for self-views. An assumption in this theory is that once people develop firmly held beliefs of themselves, they prefer others to see and validate them as they see themselves to ensure that the ideas, they have about themselves are sensible are. Therefore, they can predict the responses of others and how to act toward them. The theory discloses that people seek self-verification to feel better about themselves and receiving feelings that one is being accepted and valued by others consequently increases worth-based self-esteem.

Festinger's (1954) Social Comparison Theory centers on the idea that there is a drive within individuals to evaluate themselves. They tend to compare themselves with others to gain accurate self-assessments. Festinger's (1954) theory underscored the idea that people contrast themselves with others to understand the world and their place in it. Based on how one compares himself with others, this social comparison likewise incorporates establishing goals on social and personal growth. People make self-evaluations based on a wide range of areas, such as physical attractiveness, wealth, intelligence, and others. This theory also presents two ways in which individuals compare themselves with others: upward and downward. In downward social comparison, an individual looks at another man he considers less than him in any chosen dimension (e.g., attractiveness, success), keeping in mind the end goal to feel better about himself and enhance his prosperity. The upward social comparison, however, is when an individual compares himself to someone more than him in any chosen dimension, because of the wish to be better than the other. It can lower the regard for oneself and result in one to feel grudge, jealousy, and disappointment towards his attributes (Festinger, 1954; Gibbons, 1986; Bagautdinova, 2018).

From the preceding discussion of theories, this study theorizes that Self-esteem and body image satisfaction are direct outcomes of selfie-phenomenon. Further, this research advances the thesis that males and females differ significantly in their selfie-taking behavior, self-esteem, and body image satisfaction. The variables involved in the study are selfie-taking behavior, self-esteem, and body image satisfaction.

Selfies refer to self-photographs that one has taken of oneself, usually with the use of a digital camera or a smartphone held at arm's length. Selfies are generally posted on various social networking sites (Unmetric, 2014) such as Facebook and Instagram. They have become a new medium for self-representation and self-expression in the modern era. The American Psychiatric Association (APA) has confirmed that taking 'selfies' is a mental disorder; they have called it

'selfitis.' The APA has defined it as an obsessive-compulsive desire to take photos of one's self and post them on social media platforms to compensate for the lack of self-esteem and to fill a gap in intimacy. Addiction to selfies has been seen in ages ranging from 12-40 years, but is most prevalent in youth, especially in teenagers in this stage, as they seek identity and are concerned about their self-image.

Self-esteem refers to an individual's general self-evaluation of his/her worth (Rosenberg, 1965; Ablooshi, 2015). The feeling of belonging or being needed, a sense of being accepted, and a feeling of being a competent person are essential aspects of self-esteem. An individual's level of self-esteem reveals personal representations of how individuals generally feel about their abilities, value, and importance across time and context (Rosenberg, 1986; Ablooshi, 2015). It represents a specific dispositional trait such as a positive self-concept that pertains to people's representations of their distinctive, or general feelings of self-confidence. Conversely, a person with low self-esteem demonstrates self-rejection, self-dissatisfaction, and self-contempt, lacks self-respect, and paints a disagreeable self-picture. Indeed, self-esteem represents the evaluation that one makes and usually maintains, for themselves (Amirazodi & Amirazodi, 2011).

Body image is an individual's perception of his physical appearance (Hingerton, 2016). The way a person perceives his body image impacts his psychological functioning and well-being. It is a multidimensional construct representing cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses to an individual's physical attributes (Muth & Cash, 1997). Muth and Cash revealed two components of body image satisfaction: satisfaction or dissatisfaction with one's physical characteristics and experience of discrete emotions. Body image is central to adolescents' development of self-concept as it serves as an essential base for self-evaluation and evaluation by others (Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999). The nature and extent of the individuals' body image have essential bearings on their functioning in almost all aspects of life, especially in growing periods.

The Looking-Glass Theory directly relates to the phenomenon of selfie because nowadays, selfies are being used as mirrors. According to Warfield (2014), people are making use of selfies as mirrors to reflect the self-image they have in their minds and what they want others to see. The technology that enabled people to take selfies made it possible for them to retake the pictures as many times as they need and gave them the freedom to decide the exact image they want others to see. This selective self-presentation was believed to improve an individual's self-esteem because they can present to others their perceived image of themselves (Tripathi & Singh, 2016). Moreover, Gabriel (2014), in his study, found that people posted their selfies online as they thought they look attractive in those photos, and they want others to perceive them as such, and this enhances their self-esteem.

Seiter (2015) also reported that posting selfies reflects and enhances self-esteem because such photos typically emphasize a person's ideal and controlled image. In another study, Lobo and

Gowda (2010) also claimed that individuals who post selfies most often believe that the portraits could boost their self-confidence and that the number of reaffirming comments for their selfies positively influence their level of confidence.

Selfies are also theorized to have implications on an individual's body satisfaction, and Festinger's (1954) Social Comparison Theory underpins this assumption. The said theory suggests that individuals make comparisons and evaluate themselves based on others around them. Cash and Pruzinsky (2002) emphasized that the person's assessment of his or her body image and appearance involve making cultural and social comparisons, which is a psychological process of evaluation of self-worth and personal physical attractiveness. Appearance-related social comparisons of an individual's selfie to others can lead a person to have positive or negative body-image satisfaction.

A study by Thornton and Maurice (1999), as cited by Bagautdinova (2018), also showed that women encounter a decrease in confidence and an increase in body disappointment and self-consciousness after being presented with photos of models who exemplify the beauty standards. Similarly, in a study by Behan (2015), it was reported that women felt negative body image satisfaction when viewing images online through Facebook and Instagram. The researcher suggested that these negative feelings were predominantly because of upward social comparison engagement. Moreover, a study has also examined how social media activities such as taking 'selfies' links to body dissatisfaction in young girls (McLean, Paxton, Weithem & Masters, 2015, Mhairtin, 2014). Their results have indicated that participants who share more self-image have higher body dissatisfaction and over evaluate their body shape to the 'thin ideal.' Also, participants who shared more self-portraits on social networking sites were found to edit their photos before posting them (Hingerton, 2016). Studies have also confirmed the positive relationship between the manipulation level over selfies and negative body image among adolescent girls.

Studies that investigated whether men and women varied in dealing with the trend of selfies, their self-esteem and body image satisfaction have also reported that there are indeed differences among the two sexes (Isuan, 2015; Tiwari, 2014; Lipowski & Lipowska, 2015; Veena, 2015; Shin et al., 2017; Hingerton, 2016; Lobo & Gowda, 2016; Wagner et al., 2016; Mclean et al., 2015).

Methodology

A descriptive research design was employed in the conduct of this study, and a proportionate simple random sampling was used to select the respondents. The respondents of the survey were the 133 students from the Grades 11 and 12 of Gingog City Comprehensive National High School constituting the Academic Track namely: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) strand, Accountancy, Business and Management (ABM) strand, Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strand, and the General Academic Strand (GAS).

Modified questionnaires were used to measure students' selfie behavior, self-esteem, and body image satisfaction. All survey questionnaires used in the study have undergone validation and reliability tests. The questionnaires were sent to the research adviser and to the school guidance counselor for examination, and their comments were incorporated right after. Furthermore, sample questionnaires were also floated to five Grade 9 students to assess the instruments' vocabulary. Using Cronbach's alpha, the reliability coefficient resulted in 0.750 for the questionnaire on perception toward selfie-taking and posting, 0.941 for self-esteem, and 0.941 for the survey on body image satisfaction.

Pearson product-moment correlation and Independent Samples T-test were used for the analysis and interpretation of the data.

Findings

Table 1 displays the Pearson R-values among the variables in the study.

The table discloses that selfie behavior, such as perception towards selfie-taking and posting, and the frequency of taking and posting selfies, does not significantly relate to self-esteem.

The same findings were also reported by Barry et al. (2015). They revealed that there was no significant relationship between self-esteem levels and the number of posts of selfies and that it appeared that individuals with low self-esteem might be as willing as those with high self-esteem to post selfies on social media sites. Another study by Mhairtin (2014) also revealed that there was no significant relationship between selfie intensity and self-esteem.

Table: 1
Pearson r Values showing Relationship between Variables

Selfie Behavior	Variable	Mean	Pearson R-value	P-value
Students' Perception of Selfie-taking and posting M = 2.62	Self-esteem	3.00	.152	.081 NS
	Body image satisfaction	2.76	.179	.010 S
Students' Frequency of Selfie-taking M = 3.16	Self-esteem	3.00	.124	.156 NS
	Body image satisfaction	2.76	.063	.468 NS
Students' Frequency of Selfie-Posting M = 3.22	Self-esteem	3.00	.122	.160 NS
	Body image satisfaction	2.76	-.046	.600 NS

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

However, the same findings negate the results of the study of Pandey and Mishra (2016). They disclosed that there was a positive correlation between taking selfies and self-esteem, asserting that the more individuals take and post selfies, the more their self-esteem increases. On the other

hand, another study by Blades (2014), as cited by Ablooshi (2015), construed that the number of selfies taken and self-esteem levels were negatively correlated, suggesting that individuals with low self-esteem tend to take more selfies than those with high self-esteem.

Table 1 further reveals that there is no significant relationship between selfie-taking and posting and body-image satisfaction. The findings are supported by the study of Wagner (2016), who also looked at the process of taking selfies and posting them on Instagram and found no correlation between selfie behavior and body image satisfaction.

According to Rieke (2016), other causes can affect an individual's body image satisfaction, such as the anxiety and differentiation of self.

Moreover, Table 1 also shows that students' perception of Selfie-taking and Posting is significantly correlated with the students' body image satisfaction with the p-value at 0.010 ($r=0.179$, positive) suggesting that students' body image satisfaction increases as they become more conscious of their selfie behavior. According to Veena (2015), selfie-taking is a great way to get in touch with oneself and to love and respect one's body.

Another variable accentuated in this study is the difference in sexes. Table 2 displays the T-Value for the Differences in selfie behavior, self-esteem, and body image satisfaction of the respondents according to sex.

Table 2 discloses that males and females do not vary in their perceptions of selfie-taking and posting, frequency of selfie-posting, self-esteem, and body image satisfaction. The present findings are supported by the study of Biolcati and Passini (2018), which revealed that both males and females frequently post selfies at equal intensity.

On the other hand, the frequency of selfie-taking was found to vary in both sexes ($p=0.01$). Females ($M=3.78$, 3-4 times a week) were found to take more selfies than males ($M=3.16$, 1-2 times a week). This result is supported by Williams (2014). He emphasized that according to a global study into the phenomenon of taking selfies, women are significantly more likely to take pictures of themselves than men. The same findings were also reported by Bennette (2014), as cited by Ablooshi (2015), who found that women take selfies 1.3 times more than men.

Table: 2

T-Value for the Differences in Selfie Behavior, Self-esteem, and Body Image Satisfaction (Sex)

Variables		Sex				T-Value	P-Value	Remark
		Male		Female				
		Mean	Desc	Mean	Desc			
Selfie Behavior	<i>Perception of Selfie-taking and Posting</i>	2.62	Agree	2.561	Agree	.665	.507	Not significant
	<i>Frequency of Selfie-taking</i>	3.16	1-2 times a week	3.78	3-4 times a week	-2.622	.010	Significant
	<i>Frequency of Selfie-Posting</i>	3.22	1-2 times a week	3.38	1-2 times a week	-.603	.548	Not significant
Self-Esteem		3.013	High	3.00	High	.201	.841	Not

							significant
Body Image Satisfaction	2.730	Satisfied	2.769	Satisfied	-.375	.708	Not significant

Moreover, the findings of the current study are also supported by Korowski et al. (2015), who revealed that women posted more selfies in different types than men. Biolcati and Passini (2018) also reported that women have a higher frequency of group selfies compared to men. Thomas (2014) believes that selfies can allow girls teenagers to present themselves and express their moods.

Conclusion

This study concluded that the students' perception of selfie-taking and posting does not relate to their self-esteem. However, it positively correlated with body image satisfaction. Moreover, the frequency of selfie-taking and posting did not impact the self-esteem and body image satisfaction of the respondents. Furthermore, both sexes do not vary on their perceptions of selfie-taking and posting, frequency of selfie-posting, self-esteem, and body image satisfaction. However, it was also found that females take more selfies than males.

Suggestions and Recommendations

It is recommended to the guidance counselors that they continue giving support and encouragement to students to maintain their positive self-esteem and body-image satisfaction. This study further recommends to future researchers that they gather qualitative data from the respondents to make the study more in-depth. It is also recommended to investigate further the correlation between self-esteem and body image satisfaction.

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