



## Psychological motives underlying selfie behavior among Egyptian college Students

Hanan Fawzy Aboeela Desokey

*Minia University, Minia, Egypt*

[hanan.fawzy@minia.edu.eg](mailto:hanan.fawzy@minia.edu.eg)

### ABSTRACT

Selfie behavior is related to a set of motives that direct Egyptian college students to it; because this phenomenon reflects the behavior of these individuals. Therefore, the research aims to search behind the motives that cause this behavior and researched this phenomenon to identify what might drive college students participating in the research to photograph themselves and the extent of their difference that in terms of degree and gender. The number of participants in this study was 2,128 students from eight divergent colleges of Egyptian University. The results confirmed that five motives lie behind this, and they were arranged in a row, recording moments, communicating with others, being amused, supporting self-confidence, and seeking attention. The females differed from the males in the motives of amusement and attention-seeking where the differences were in favor of the females, and this was explained due to the different natures of life for both sexes in Egyptian society, where females have more free time, As for the rest of the motives, there were no differences between them, and they did not differ in the degree to which they took pictures in general, because this does not depend on gender as much as it depends on the availability of smart devices and their applications for them.

### ARTICLE INFO

Received : June 13, 2021

Revised : June 19, 2021

Accepted : July 27, 2021

### KEYWORDS

*Psychological motives, Selfie behavior, Egyptian college students*

### Suggested Citation in APA Style 7<sup>th</sup> Edition:

Desokey, H.F.A. (2021). Psychological motives underlying selfie behavior among Egyptian college students. *International Research Journal of Science, Technology, Education, and Management*, 1(1), 35-43. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5195632>

## **INTRODUCTION**

The activities of social networking sites and the Internet, in general, are highly popular among members of society; so that many industries have emerged as a result of these activities, such as selfie stick and mobile phone photo applications, to enhance the ability of users to self-capture and publish images. However, despite the progress of psychological research and studies on behaviors related to the Internet and social networking sites, there is still a delay in following the accelerated progress on behavior related to the use of their applications to reveal the internal and personal motives that play a role behind the emergence of some of these behaviors (Barry, Reiter, Anderson, Schoesler, Sidoti, 2017, p.1).

Despite the increasing popularity of selfies in social media, little is known about how self-portraits reflect the inner motivations of their owners and how people judge others' personalities by their behavior toward portraying themselves (Qiu, et al, 2015, p.443). Pictures mean the self-representation of a person. When he photographs himself, he does so for two main reasons, which are to better understand himself and express himself to others through an objective representation of himself. Self-portraits allow him to see himself as others see and as he would like to appear to others; what image he takes says something about him, his family, or friends, and his profession, interests, and lifestyle, all of which reflect important aspects to him (Suler, 2015, p.1). Qiu et al. (2015, p.447) elucidated that judging the characteristics of an individual precisely through his selfies is difficult for several reasons, including that the self-images of individuals allow them to fully control their appearance, so they can easily change their facial expressions and make eye contact to appear different from their natural image, and then selfies can also be manipulated to present an image. Nonetheless, I found numerous studies that dealt with personality traits concerning the symbols of selfies. Qiu, et al, (2015) concluded that extroversion is not associated with any of the symbols selfies and that the positive signs of selfies predict emotion, acceptability, and openness to experience, whereas the results of Paris and Pietschnig (2015) indicated neuroticism. Furthermore, a study has concluded that negative trends toward selfies are negatively related to emotional and extroversion, and Kim and Chock, (2017) also validated that extroversion is positively associated with the publication of individual and group images, and that acceptability is associated with the publication of group pictures, whereas conscientiousness is not associated with the publication of individual or group images.

Research results have varied in determining the preferences of the motives that drive individuals to take and publish selfies, Bevan, ( 2016) verified that 68.35% of individuals post selfies to overcome boredom, 65.83% to express themselves, 60.83% to attract attention, 21.66% to enhance self-confidence, and 11.66% is to obtain pleasure. Moreover, Balkrishnan, et al., (2018) concluded that self-confidence is the first motive associated with selfies, Magc, (2017) argued that the main motives for capturing selfies are to eliminate boredom and the need for communication and communication and that expressing oneself while attracting attention is not a psychological motive for a selfie. Biolcati and Passini, (2018) corroborated that individuals publish selfies for documentation mainly and the motives of entertainment, communication, and attention in a moderate manner. Bij de vaate, et al., (2018), affirmed that recording and preservation are the primary motives for publishing and capturing selfies. Concerning the differences between males and females in selfie behavior, Sorokowska et al., (2016); Sorokowski, Sorokowska, Frackowiak, Karwowski, Ruusicka, and Oleszkiewicz ( 2016); Biolcati, and Passini, (2018); and Boursier, and Manna, (2018) agreed that significant differences exist between males and females in the selfie posting behavior in favor of females. Conversely, Kim and Chock, (2016); Barry, et al., (2017), and Arpacı, Baloglu, (2018) disagreed with them, as they found that there are differences between males and females in the behavior of selfie publishing, Biolcati, and Passini, (2018) found no differences among males and females in propagation-related drivers.

All this knowledge inspired me to study the selfie syndrome among Egyptian university students in our society and investigate the psychological motives underlying it. The first research question assessed whether the responses of Egyptian university students vary in arranging the psychological motives of selfies. We also tested the second hypothesis that the frequency of the responses of Egyptian students does not differ in the degree of taking

selfies, both individuals and groups with different genders. The third research question investigated whether the frequency of the responses of Egyptian students to posting selfies does not differ according to gender. Finally, the fourth research question explored whether the psychological motives of selfies do not differ according to gender.

## **METHODS**

### **Sample and General Procedures**

Our study sample comprises 2,128 students from eight divergent colleges of Egyptian University, and the participants are 19-23 years old, with 20.28 years being the average age and 1.128 is the standard deviation. The data confirmed that 88.5% of the participants always take selfies, whereas 11.5% of the participants did not care about taking those pictures. As for publishing the captured photos, 58.5% published their photos, and 41.5% took pictures for themselves and did not publish them. The average number of individual photos during the past week was 8.20, while the average number of group photos was 8.98. The sample subjects were asked a question related to arranging the psychological motives for taking selfies according to their point of view.

### **Measures**

The researcher designed a questionnaire to collect information related to the degree of taking selfies individually or collectively, with the choices of the subject ranging from low to medium and then to large degrees. The questionnaire also included a question about the subject's question about publishing those pictures, research whose answer was "yes" or "no." The analysis of the results of the questionnaire was based on the calculation of percentages and repetitions. The psychological motivation scale for the self-imaging syndrome was designed by researchers after reviewing several related measures, such as Sung et al, (2016), Charoensukmongkol, (2016), Balkrishnan, and Griffiths, (2018), and Bij de vaate, et al, (2018). The scale may be in its final form of 48 items distributed on five positively appreciated dimensions, namely communication with others, support for self-confidence, event recording, attention-seeking, and entertainment. The coefficient of Cronbach's alpha of the scale was 0.818. The validity of the scale was also verified by calculating the correlation coefficients between the total score on the scale and the dimensions score on the same scale (Sung et al, 2016), and the scores were correlated with a significant correlation at the level of significance (0.01 ).

### **Data Analysis**

Some descriptive statistical indicators of the research sample in the variables were calculated by calculating the values of the coefficients of torsion and kurtosis to verify the moderation of the distribution of the subjects of the research sample in their motives toward self-imaging behavior. The limits of each of the coefficients of kurtosis were close to a range of -3 to +3, and the data were closer to moderate distribution. To deal with the first and second research questions, the demographic data for the study questionnaire was collected by entering the completed questionnaires data in an Excel form throughout the study period using a coding system, and then by analyzing the data by calculating the frequencies and percentages in addition to the use of the Ka2 test. The third question was dealt with using arithmetic averages and the T-test to calculate the significance of the differences between the mean scores of the males and females in the psychological motives associated with the self-imaging behavior.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results of the research corroborated that the most preferred motive for the research sample for taking selfies was the motive for recording moments as the first choice, whereas the least favorable motive for them was the drive to attract attention. The arrangement of the psychological motives for the self-portraying behavior by research in the order is recording moments, communicating with others, being entertained, supporting self-confidence, and seeking attention. The results also indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the frequency of male and female responses in the degree of taking selfies. There were also no differences between males and females in terms of the motives for communicating with others, supporting self-confidence, and recording moments, whereas there were significant differences between them in the motive for attention-seeking and the motive for entertainment in favor of females.

**Table 1.** Frequencies and percentages of motivations for practicing self-portrayal behaviour

Choice	Motives	Repetition	Percentage (%)
First	Recording moments	1,123	52.8
	Being entertained	362	17
	Seeking attention	238	9
	Supporting self-confidence	192	11.2
	Communicating with others	213	10
Second	Recording moments	192	9
	Being entertained	64	3
	Seeking attention	170	8
	Supporting self-confidence	255	12
	Communicating with others	1447	68
Third	Recording moments	149	7
	Being entertained t	1,149	54
	Seeking attention	298	14
	Supporting self-confidence	106	5
	Communicating with others	426	20
Fourth	Recording moments	383	18
	Being entertained	64	3
	Seeking attention	319	15
	Supporting self-confidence	1,234	58
	Communicating with others	128	6
Fifth	Recording moments	106	5
	Being entertained	132	6.2

	Seeking attention	1,447	68
	Supporting self-confidence	251	11.8
	Communicating with others	192	9

Table 1. shows that the most preferred motive for the research sample to take selfies is the motive for preserving and recording moments as the first choice with 52.8% and as the fifth choice with 5%. The least detailed motive by the research sample is the attention-seeking motive, which ranked a high percentage as the fifth choice with 68%, while its selection ranked first with 9%. It is evident by monitoring these frequencies and percentages that the psychological motives for the self-portrayal behavior are ranked in order (recording moments, communicating with others, being entertained, supporting self-confidence, seeking attention).

**Table 2.** Intermittent table of gender (Selfie Score)

			Selfies captured with degrees			Total
			Few	Medium	Big	
Gender	Males	Repetition	248	390	430	1,068
		Percentage of recurrence of the same gender	23.22	36.52	40.26	100%
		The percentage of recurrence within the degree of response	10.21	14.21	26.11	50.53
		Frequency percentage in relation to the grand total	12.17	15.27	23.09	50.53
	Females	Repetition	297	345	418	1,060
		Percentage of recurrence of the same gender	28.02	32.55	39.434	100%
		The percentage of recurrence within the degree of response	9.14	18.11	22.22	49.47
		Frequency percentage in relation to the grand total	10.14	18.15	21.18	49.47
	Total	Repetition	545	735	848	2,128
		Percentage of recurrence of the same gender	25.61	34.54	39.85	100%
		The percentage of recurrence within the degree of response	100%	100%	100%	100%
		Frequency percentage in relation to the grand total	25.61	34.54	39.85	100%

**Table 3.** “X<sup>2</sup>” value test

	Value	Degrees of freedom	Indication
Pearson X <sup>2</sup> Link	0.815	2	0.666
Probability ratio	0.981	1	0.612
Linear correlation	0.053	1	0.818
Number of cases available			2,128

Table 2. Represents a double repetition table that contains male and female samples in rows, and responses to the variable of the degree of taking selfies distributed in columns. In each intersecting cell between the two variables, there are four numbers: the first number in it indicates the frequency, and the second number indicates the percentage of the recurrence within the same type male-female. The third number indicates the percentage of the frequency concerning the degree of the responses of the individual to taking a selfie to a small, medium, or large degree, and the fourth number indicates the percentage concerning the total number of total responses for the sample members. Table III. exhibits the results of the (X<sup>2</sup>) test and its level of statistical significance, as the calculated value of (X<sup>2</sup>) is equal to 0.815 and not statistically significant, which indicates that there are no statistically significant differences between the frequency of the responses of both males and females in the degree of taking selfies. As for the gender differences in the degree of taking selfies, the results validated that the calculated value of X<sup>2</sup> is equal to 0.815, which is a non-statistically significant value. To the applications that allow adding interesting effects to the captured images, making the common element among all is the curiosity for those effects, and these applications and not gender are the control over that.

**Table 4.** Significance of differences between the mean scores of males in the motives associated with selfies

Motives		Number	Average	Standard deviation	"F" ratio	"T" value	Freedom degrees	Indication
Recording moments	Males	1,068	29.22	5.65	1.88	0.29-	964.21	Not significant
	Females	1,060	28.82	5.04				
Being entertained	Males	1,068	17.48	6.13	0.82	5.88	969.99	0.01
	Females	1,060	19.71	5.82				
Seeking attention	Males	1,068	35.16	7.98	14.58	4.21	940.64	0.01
	Females	1,060	37.28	7.42				
Supporting self-	Males	1,068	29.72	5.61	1.87	1.48-	964.11	Not

confidence	Females	1,060	28.42	5.11				significant
Communicating with others	Males	1,068	18.26	5.77	3.86	1.56-	967.50	Not significant
	Females	1,060	18.85	6.21				

Table 4 displays the absence of significant differences between males and females in the motives for recording moments, supporting self-confidence, and communicating with others, whereas there are statistically significant differences between the motive for entertainment and the motive for attention-seeking in favor of females as their arithmetic averages are higher than those of males. What the study revealed leads to the interpretation of its results in a logical manner closer to reality.

The motive of “recording moments” is ranked first among the psychological motives chosen by the members of the study sample, which can be traced back to the fact that ancient Egyptian people from time immemorial liked to participate in and document social events, and this is indicated by the fees. And the inscriptions recorded on the walls of temples and caves in the era of the pharaohs. It seems that contemporary Egyptians are not different from ancient Egyptians, as this study showed that young participants chose to record moments as the first impulse to photograph themselves, and this became associated with the use of modern technology and smartphones. Thus, the selfie is a natural development of what contemporary Egyptians inherited from their ancestors, the ancient pharaohs. Regardless of the method, the motive is the same. As for the "communication with others" motive occupying the second place among the psychological motives of selfies, this can be explained by the fact that young people resort to this because they are convinced that it is a way to maintain and strengthen the continuity of their relationships in light of the contemporary challenges of being together face to face, such as urging social distancing in light of the COVID- 19 virus crisis, Therefore, they tend to be the photos that they take and publish are an effective way for them to preserve their existing relationships and even build new ones that they gain through comments from their friends' friends on them and expressing their admiration for each other. The results of the order of motives came partly in agreement with the results of a study (Biolcatia & Passini, 2018) and were different from the results of studies (Priyanka, 2020; Magc, 2018).

As for the gender differences in the degree of taking a selfie, the results confirmed that the calculated value of X2 is equal to 0.815, which is a non-statistically significant value, and this can be explained by the fact that the phenomenon of self-imaging has become a habit among young people by the availability of smartphones with them regardless of their gender. This result was consistent with the study of Molly and Helen, (2019). Help them do that, as it is an inexpensive process that does not require a specific skill, but rather it depends only on knowing the capabilities of the phone and the applications attached to it. Concerning researching the existence of differences between males and females in the motives for selfie photography, there were differences between them in the motives for entertainment and attention-seeking in favor of females, whereas there were no differences between them in the other three motives.

This was partly consistent with the results of studies (Saleem, et al., 2016; Biolcati & Passini, 2018; Boursier & Manna, 2018). The existence of differences in favor of females in the motive for leisure can be explained by the fact that they have more free time than males at this age, as males in societies with high poverty rates such as ours tend to work for their needs while studying at university and therefore are busy. They work and study for a long time, unlike females who mainly depend on their families, do not work, and only have their studies, so they have more time to spend on self-photography than males. As for the motive of attention-seeking, the differences between them also tend to favor females and it can be interpreted that at these ages, females care more about their appearance than males, which inclines them to take many pictures of themselves to select, keep, or publish for attention. These images are an easy and effective way to achieve this attention.

There are some study limitations. I found it difficult with this number of participants in this number of the largest possible number than was expected in terms of the modular presentation "COVID-19" pandemic and stopping this model. Nevertheless, this was overcome as much as possible by applying study tools over a longer period.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

This was the first study to explore the self-imaging syndrome in Egyptian youth as a descriptive study that reveals the underlying motives behind the phenomenon. In Arab societies in general, the study of such phenomena is delayed because they believe that they are not attractive to study and research, although they hide behind them deep behavioral and psychological connotations that lead to good studies in the future. Finally, the author recommends conducting more research about the newest behaviors in our world especially from the use of modern technology.

## **REFERENCES**

- Arpaci, I., Baloglu, M. & Kesici, S. (2018). The relationship among individual differences in individualism – collectivism, extraversion, and self-presentation. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 1(121), 89 - 92.
- Balakrishnan, J. & Griffiths, M.D. (2018). An exploratory study of “selfitis” and the development of the selfitis behavior scale. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 16 (3), 722 - 736.
- Barry, C.T., Doucette, H., Loflin, D.C., Rivera-Hudson, N. & Herrington, L.L. (2017). “Let me take a selfie”: Associations between self-photography, narcissism, and self-esteem. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 6. (1), 48.1 - 13.
- Barry, C.T., Reiter, S.R., Anderson, A.C., Schoessler, M.L. & Sidoti, C.L. (2017). “Let me take another selfie”: Further examination of the relation between narcissism, self-perception, and instagram posts, 1(2), 1 - 19.
- Bevan, J. (2016). Perception of selfie takers versus selfie stick users: Exploring personality and social attraction differences. *Computer in Human Behavior*, 1(75), 494 - 500.
- Biolcati, R. & Passini, S. (2018). Narcissism and self-esteem: Different motivations for selfie posting behaviors. *Cogent Psychology*, 5 (1), 1 - 12.
- Bij de Vaate, A.J.D., Veldhuis, J., Allewa, J.M., Konijn, E.A. & Van Hugten, C.H.M. (2018). Show your best self (ie): An exploratory study on selfie-related motivations and behavior in emerging adulthood. *Telematics and Informatics*, 35(5), 1392 - 1407. Doi:10.1016/i.tele.2018.03.010.
- Boursier, V. & Manna, V. (2018). Selfie expectancies among adolescents: Construction and validation of an instrument to assess expectancies toward selfies among boys and girls. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9 (839), 1 - 14.
- Charoensukmongkol, P. (2016). Exploring personal characteristics associated with selfie-liking. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, 10 (2), 1 - 13. Doi: 10.5817/CP2016-2-7.
- Kim, J.W. & Chock, T.M. (2017). Personality traits and psychological motivations predicting selfie posting behaviors social networking sites. *Telematics and Informatics*, 34 (5), 560 - 571.
- Magc, C. (2017). Selfie taking: Motivation and effects to self-identity development, 1-11., Retrieved from <https://ar.scribd.com/document/350885851/selfie-taking-Motivation-Effects-to-self-Identity-Development>.
- Molly, J & Helen, S. (2019). Selfitis among college students. *Indian Journal of Psychological Science*, 11 (2), 1 - 12.
- Paris, C.M. & Pietschnig, J. (2015). But first, let me take a selfie s: Personality traits as predictors of travel selfie taking and sharing behaviors. *Tourism Travel and Research Association Advancing Tourism Research Globally*, 7:https://scholarworks.com.edu/tra/tra 2015/Academic papers-oral.
- Priyanka, A. (2020). Exploring correlates of selfitis and narcissism among Indian adolescent. *Clinical Psychiatry*, 6 (1), 67-78.
- Qui, L., Lu, J., Yang, S., Qu, W. & Zhu, T. (2015). What does your selfie say about you? *Computers in Human Behavior*, 1 (52), 443 - 449.
- Saleem, M, Adeeb, M, Zaffar, M. & Mustapa, M. (2016). Narcissism and selfie posting motivation among youth Pakistan: The mediating role of perceived acceptance, Social sciences postgraduate international seminar

(SSPIS)2016,51TH December, 2016, Editor Ramli, R., Zaharin, N,Drani, S, Singh, P., School of social science, USM, ISBN978-967-11473-8-2.

- Sorokowska, A., Oleszkiewicz, A., Frackowiak, T., K., Chmiel, A. & Sorokowski, P. (2016). Selfies and personality: Who posts self-portrait photographs? *Personality and Individual Differences*, 1 (90), 119-123. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2015.10.1037.
- Suler, J. (2015). From self-portraits to selfies. *International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies*, 12 (2), 175 - 180.
- Sung, Y., Lee, J.A., Kim, E. & Choi, S.M. (2016). Why we post selfies: Understanding motivations for posting pictures of oneself. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 1(97) ,260 - 265. doi:10.1016/j.paid.1016.03.032.