

# A Study on the Pattern of Selfie Culture among University Students in Bangladesh

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## Abstract

This study endeavors to explore the determinants behind the prevalence of selfie culture in the light of self-presentation strategies. It applied Erving Goffman's (1959) Self-Presentation theory to scrutinize the pattern of selfie culture among university students in Bangladesh. Following a qualitative methodology, semi-structured interviews were conducted among 20 participants as a purposive sample age range from 20 to 25 years old. The results demonstrate that the participants tend to invest considerable attention to take selfies, afterward use filters to maximize the "best version" of the self, and eventually post them in the digital world. Their desire to represent the "best version" of themselves and gain the attention of others reflect the narcissist traits of the participants. Also, their level of self-esteem increases when they feel confident and see their "retouched image" after using photographic filters.

**Keywords:** Selfie culture, self-presentation, self-esteem, narcissism, digital world, Bangladesh.

## INTRODUCTION

Selfies are not only omnipresent, but also a prime feature of the online daily lives of most digitally attached people (Iqani & Schroeder, 2016). With the emergence of camera phones, selfie-taking has become a habitual aspect in the digital culture (Yellowlees, Dingemans, Veldhuis, & de Vaate, 2019). It seems to be quite difficult to find people in this modern world who use social media but never snap selfies (Islam, 2021). Consequently, the selfie taking behavior has caught attention in mass media and research across the world (Zhao & Zappavigna, 2018).

Taking and posting selfies on the social media platform has become one of the most popular activities in contemporary society (Boursier, Gioia, & Griffiths, 2020). Though selfie may appear to be the current fad, its popularity has had a transformational impact on contemporary culture. It stirs pivotal controversy in communication, photography, psychology, self-expression, and digital media studies (Iqani & Schroeder, 2016). The rapid growth of social media in daily life has raised innumerable questions regarding how users present themselves in this field (Barry, Doucette, Loflin, Rivera-Hudson, & Herrington, 2017).

One research showed that narcissist individuals are involved in selfie posting behavior in order to grab the attention of others (Biolcati & Passini, 2018). Another study asserted that individuals with high self-esteem post the highest number of selfies whereas the lowest number of selfies are taken and posted by the people with low self-esteem (Alblooshi, 2015).

Narcissism is an excessive interest in and admiration for one's own physical appearance or own abilities

(Cambridge Dictionary, n.d). In the Eighteenth century, several studies defined narcissism as the creation of an idealized image of the self and the desire to merge with this image (Mathas, 2011). On the other hand, self-esteem refers to the confidence or satisfaction in oneself (Galbraith, 1994). It indicates how much worth, or value people place on themselves as an individual (Thomaes, Poorthuis, & Nelemans, 2011). These two concepts are relevant to our study.

Since selfie culture is in fashion across the globe, it becomes pivotal to examine the grounds for its popularity (Srivastava, Upadhaya, Sharma, & Gupta, 2018). Considering all these facts, it seems to be quite significant to systematically analyze the selfie culture practices among university students in Bangladesh. Therefore, this study aims to address the following points: firstly, to explore the determinants behind the prevalence of selfie culture; secondly, to examine the reasons for taking, editing, and posting selfies on social media; thirdly, to highlight whether there are any underlying gender differences in terms of selfie practices; and lastly, to scrutinize if narcissism or self-esteem or both traits exist in selfie-related behaviors.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. Motives for Snapping and Posting Selfies**

Shah and Tewari (2016) examined the reasons for taking selfies among young college students in India adopting focus group discussion (FDG). Interestingly, it showed that feedback to selfies usually function as a motivator for users to enhance and align themselves according to the norms of the community. Another study conducted by Pounders, Kowalczyk, and Stowers (2016) investigated the determinants behind publishing selfies among female millennials. It was found that happiness, physical appearance, and self-esteem function as motivators to post selfies on social media. Al-Kandari and Abdelaziz (2018) attempted to explore the reasons for taking and posting selfies on social media platforms among university students in Kuwait. The results revealed that people snap and post selfies for motives of appraisal seeking self-presentation, entertainment, status-update, self-presentation, and documentation.

### **2. Self-objectification and Selfies**

Caso, Schettino, Fabbricatore, and Conner (2020) analyzed the relationships between self-objectification and selfie-behavior among female university students in Italy. The study showed that sexism and self-esteem were correlated with self-objectification. Interestingly, self-objectification was positively associated with the frequency of selfie-posting and selfie-editing behaviors. In the U.K., Bell, Cassarly, and Dunbar (2018) investigated the extent to which young women portray themselves in an objectifying manner on social media. They sought to understand whether the frequency of posting objectified self-images could be predicted by positive feedback. The results indicated that about one third of female users' Instagram self-images were objectified where sexually suggestive pose was the most common form of objectification. Stuart and Kurek (2019) explained both potential risks and consequences of taking selfies during a developmental period among adolescent girls. It explored that the frequency of taking selfies was strongly related to the frequency of taking self-sexualizing selfies which may indirectly increase aggression and victimization online.

### **3. Photographic Filters and Body Dissatisfaction**

Tiggemann and Brown (2020) examined the relationship between selfie editing and body dissatisfaction in the laboratory. The respondents were asked to see Instagram images of thin women or of average-sized women. It was found that viewing thin images increased negative mood and body dissatisfaction regardless of experimental condition. Most importantly, taking and editing selfies resulted in an increased negative mood and facial dissatisfaction. Kleemans, Daalmans, Carbaat, and Anschütz (2018) focused on the effect of manipulated photos on the body image of female adolescents. They found that exposure to manipulated Instagram photos led to lower body satisfaction of adolescent girls. Mills, Musto, Williams, and Tiggemann (2018) investigated the effects of posting selfies on social media among female undergraduate students. The results demonstrated that women who were likely to take and post selfies on social media found feeling more anxious, less confident and less physically attractive. Even when they got the opportunity to retake and modify their selfies before posting on social media, they still felt a decreased degree of anxiety.

#### **4. Age and Gender Distinction in Selfie Phenomenon**

Dhir, Pallesen, Torsheim, and Andreassen (2016) investigated whether age and gender differences exist in terms of selfie-related behaviors. They scrutinized selfie snapping, editing, and posting behaviors among Norwegian adolescents, young adults, and adults. The results demonstrated that women were more active in selfie-related behaviors in contrast to men. The young adults were found to be more likely to take, edit, and post selfies on social media than older adults. Another research conducted by Dhir, Torsheim, Pallesen, and Andreassen (2017) examined the effect of privacy concerns on selfie-related behaviors across gender and different age groups. They conducted a survey among Norwegian social media users. It was found that women had greater privacy concerns compared to men. As a result, female participants had lower engagement in selfie-related behavior on social media whereas the privacy concern did not influence male adolescents and young adults (ibid, 2017). To this date, very little research has investigated whether gender differences exist in selfie-related behaviors. Therefore, this present study focuses on university students to analyze the pattern of selfie culture in terms of gender distinction.

#### **5. Linkage between Narcissism and Selfie**

Amurao and Castronuevo (2016) investigated the relationship between selfie practice and narcissism among women. The results showed that there was a strong positive relationship between the selfie behavior and narcissism. Dutta et al. (2016) examined the attitudes toward selfie taking, body image acceptance, and narcissism personality characteristics among school-going students in Mumbai. It revealed that participants (10.9%) edited their selfies using software “very often” to make pictures more appealing. A few of them (3%) attempted to gain a particular body type or look to get more popularity (ibid, 2016). None of these studies followed a qualitative approach to investigate how and if narcissistic traits exist in selfie-related behaviors in a descriptive way, hence, the present study applied qualitative methods to explore the psychological aspects of selfie culture in the light of self-presentation strategies.

#### **6. Relationship between Self-esteem and Selfie**

Shin, Kim, Im, and Chong (2017) examined the impact of selfies on people. Applying social comparison theory, they emphasized on two psychological factors: social sensitivity and self-esteem. It was found that taking and sharing selfies could result in greater social sensitivity and lower self-esteem of selfie takers. Wang, Yang, and Haigh (2017) analyzed the psychological effects of posting and viewing selfies on social media platforms. Using a survey approach, the results indicated that frequent selfie viewing behavior led to decreased self-esteem and life satisfaction. On the other hand, frequent groupie viewing was positively correlated with self-esteem and life satisfaction. Sorokowski et al. (2015) analyzed three types of selfies: (1) own selfies; (2) selfies with a romantic partner; (3) group selfies. According to the results, women were more likely to upload all types of selfies compared to men. But the connection between narcissism and selfie publishing behavior was stronger among men than women.

#### **7. The Present Research**

Although several studies have examined selfie-related behaviors in the Western world (e.g., Pounders et al., 2016; Dhir et al., 2016; Mills et al., 2018; Bell et al., 2018; Stuart & Kurek, 2019; Caso et al., 2020), little research has been conducted in this area from an Asian perspective. It is assumed that selfie practices might vary from culture to culture in terms of distinct regional contexts. Because, we believe that every culture has its own peculiarities, and intelligent observation of our own society also prompted us to think that selfie culture in Bangladesh probably has many unique features which are different from other cultures. Therefore, there is a need to investigate selfie-related behaviors in Asian or non-Western countries - particularly in Bangladesh - which will offer a new way of thinking about selfie practices outside the Western nations. It is anticipated that this research will contribute new knowledge in the academic field by providing a comprehensive understanding of the selfie phenomenon from an Asian or non-Western perspective.

Most importantly, to the authors’ knowledge, no systematic research has been conducted on the pattern of selfie culture in Bangladesh. Besides, the purpose of this study is not only to explore the determinants behind the popularity of selfie culture, but also to examine whether narcissism or self-esteem or both traits exist in selfie-related behaviors in the context of Bangladesh, which makes the study unique.

## 8. Theoretical Framework

The selfie culture among university students in Bangladesh was analyzed in the light of the theoretical concept of Erving Goffman's (1959) Self-Presentation theory. Goffman (1959) points out a process where an individual involves in selective presentation to control his/her impression in front of other people. The desire to depict an ideal self and gratify the audience pushes him/her to engage in self-presentation strategies. In this circumstance, people make an attempt to manage an impression by changing their appearance or behavior which is called self-presentation. The impression management strategy refers to the conscious or unconscious effort that an individual makes to influence how other people perceive them. It is said that people strive to influence and manipulate information in the setting of social interaction. In other words, the presenter implicitly requests his/her audience to take seriously the impression that is being created in front of them.

The universe is viewed as a stage in Goffman's dramaturgical model (1959), where individual performance relies on the circumstances and the audience. He compares everyday social interaction with a theatrical performance, in which individuals are perceived as actors, the environment as a stage, and the people who watch the performance as audience. The phrase 'front stage' refers to an individual's performance in a public place that demands impression management techniques, for instance, applying makeup or wearing costumes. On the contrary, 'backstage behavior' is the behavior behind the scenes, which takes place in a private setting where people feel calm. To sum up, in order to provide a positive image, each individual adopts both front stage behavior, or the performance in front of others, and back stage behavior, or the preparation work that is invisible to others (Goffman, 1959).

This theory seems to be significant for understanding the behavioral and psychological patterns of the participants who are motivated to engage in the selfie production process. Adopting Self-Presentation theory as a theoretical framework, this study examines the selfie culture practice among the selected university students in Bangladesh. In this regard, findings were interpreted with Goffman's (1959) Self-Presentation theory.

## METHOD

Following a qualitative methodology, in-depth interviews were carried out to examine selfie practices among university students in Bangladesh. As this study attempts to explore the factors behind the existing selfie culture, a qualitative methodology seems to be best suited for this research to examine participants' motivation, behavioral pattern, and psychological aspects of selfie-related activities in a comprehensive and interpretive way.

### 1. The Research Participants

According to a study, young people are more likely to take selfies compared to older people (Qiu, Lu, Yang, Qu, & Zhu, 2015). Since earlier research found significant age differences in selfie use behaviors, this study intends to examine selfie practices targeting the youth group. The inclusion criteria included being a young university student, owning a smartphone, and having an active account on social media space like Facebook or Instagram. The participants who never posted selfies on social media were excluded from this study. Therefore, a purposive sampling method was used to choose participants.

A total of 20 participants whose age ranged between 20 and 25 years were chosen for this study. The sample size consisted of 10 (50%) male and 10 (50%) female respondents. Both undergraduate and graduate students were contacted to participate in this research. The data were collected from five universities listed in Table 1.

### 2. Data Collection

Semi-structured interview technique was followed to collect respondents' experience towards the selfie phenomenon. The interview continued with open-ended questions. It was ensured that participants' names that could disclose their identity would not be mentioned in this research, therefore, this study marks the respondents with pseudonyms.

### 3. Data Analysis

An interpretive approach was adopted to analyze interview responses. All the data collected from interviews were first transcribed and then scrutinized applying the thematic analysis method introduced by Braun and Clarke (2006). This study explores repeated patterns of meaning following the six steps of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

**Table 1: The sample size of this study**

University	Male	Female	Number of students
University of Dhaka (DU)	2	2	4
Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP)	2	2	4
North South University (NSU)	2	2	4
BRAC University (BRACU)	2	2	4
American International University-Bangladesh (AIUB)	2	2	4
Total			20

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The thematic analysis method was applied to analyze data. The significant themes are coded as follows: (1) determinants behind taking selfies, (2) reasons behind using photo editing apps, (3) determinants behind posting selfies on social media, (4) reasons behind keeping offline selfies, and (5) gender differences in selfie-related behaviors.

### 1. Determinants Behind Taking Selfies

. This theme sheds light on the reasons behind taking selfies by the participants. It was found that four major factors influenced their selfie taking behavior. These are furnished below.

#### a. Selfie is taken for projecting an elegant appearance

This factor reflects upon the strong urge of the respondents’ conscientious selfie taking impulse to appear glamorous either in still photos or in the social media world. Such standpoint on self-presentation or practicing the selfie culture testifies beautification as the foremost need. The obsession with getting the most attractive looking image can lead to the practice of taking selfies from different angles. Nishi Shikder, a 3rd year student, department of Marketing, University of Dhaka aptly explained how physical appearance plays a decisive role in selfie snapping behavior when she stated:

*“When I was quite healthy, I wasn’t accustomed to taking selfies. Four years ago, I looked at myself in the mirror as a chubby person, then I felt so frustrated. At present, I have become quite slim, so I take selfies frequently. I click 2 to 3 selfies on a casual day, but the number turns 50 to 200 during occasions like a party, wedding, birthday, farewell and so on.”*

This study reveals that beautiful places and occasions such as restaurants, party houses, wedding ceremonies, birthday celebrations, farewell events etc. motivate participants to click selfies more frequently. It was found that location is one of the most fundamental factors to snap selfies because well-decorated places encourage them to capture an impressive selfie. Therefore, it can be argued that selfie taking activities are strongly associated with the background, lighting, and environment of a place. Another participant Jannatul Nayem, a 1st year student, department of Computer Science and Engineering, North South University explained the reason for clicking numerous selfies in the following way:



*'I always have high expectations before clicking the pictures. Sometimes, I start to take selfies and realize I'm not looking perfect in the pictures. Then I feel frustrated and start clicking more selfies to meet the expectation of an ideal look. Consequently, I end up taking 150 to 200 selfies from multiple angles.'*

It is evident that participants' physical appearance tends to stimulate their urge to snap selfies. According to them, while they feel pretty, they become inspired to click selfies. The young girls are particularly very concerned about their appearance, so they snap selfies to achieve a perfect look for self-presentation purposes. In this sense, such behavior triggers their narcissist characteristics that lead them to spend a considerable amount of time and effort on their make-up, dressing, and appearance before taking selfies.

#### **b. Selfie is taken for projecting an elegant appearance**

This factor discloses that participants consider selfie taking practice as a playful, entertaining, and enjoyable activity to escape from their monotonous state of mind. For example, Maruf Morshed, a master's student, department of English, Bangladesh University of Professionals asserted:

*"Before the exam, I tend to make a funny face beside the books and click selfies. It's really fun to post such pictures on Facebook, as people put several sarcastic comments about their stress before the exam. Sometimes, I feel bored in the classroom, I click selfies to escape from the stress."*

According to the responses of the participants, selfie is a medium of digital expression and taking selfies by oneself is an act of fun. They reported that selfies can minimize stress or dullness, for instance, before an exam, they tend to click selfies and post on social media. Comments and reactions from their friends reduce their stress and make the moment interesting.

It is found that a selfie is associated with the users' sense of control, freedom and the ability to capture oneself in the picture independently. For instance, Rashid Hassan, a 2nd year student, department of Architecture, BRAC University mentioned the flexibility of taking selfies:

*"When I go out with my friends, I take group selfies with them. Because it makes me look like I have a cheerful life. As I'm the tallest boy among my friends, they always ask me to take a group selfie so that everyone can be in the frame. In this context, I become a selfie stick for them. Besides, we don't need to request anyone to take our group photo."*

Similar to the factor of physical appearance, they also intend to portray a positive image while experiencing a pleasure time. The participants asserted that selfies should not be taken with unhappy faces, because they intend to appear having an enjoyable life in front of others. Therefore, the moment of happiness or joyfulness is a crucial element in a selfie. Such narratives reflect the fact that it is quite important for the participants to portray a cheerful life via selfies. This finding is consistent with Goffman's (1959) Self-Presentation theory that points out individuals' attempt to display his/her positive image to others.

Apart from that, the smart phones have built-in cameras that allow users not to worry about carrying a separate or traditional camera with them, so they can enjoy full privilege to adjust photo angles comfortably. The use of a selfie stick along with a smartphone helps the users set preferred length, angle, and height for desirable selfies. Therefore, it can be argued that selfie is quite flexible to capture oneself in the picture without the help of others.

#### **c. Selfie helps to document moments**

Another important factor behind participants' motivation to take selfies is their intention to record special moments and preserve them forever. Jahid Hossain, a final year student, department of Finance, American International University-Bangladesh considers selfies as a tool to document precious moments. He

*“On the last day of our university life, I took many selfies with my friends. I didn’t post all of them on social media, rather I stored those selfies as a beautiful moment.”*

According to the respondents, selfies can freeze a moment and allow them to cherish the memory in future. They expressed the desire to revisit their special moment that they captured a long time ago. According to them, selfies would enable them to reminisce about their past life events and would tell a story of who they were. In this context, selfies act as a more powerful tool for memory retention than words. They tend to upload selfies in an organized manner in the digital album of Facebook, as online selfie albums are easily accessible and they can scroll their own profile easily to revisit memories.

#### **d. Selfie is compatible for sharing with others**

This factor sheds light on the relationship between selfie taking and posting practice on social media platforms. Selfies on social media allow the participants for self-exploration, communication and online presence in the digital world. Abir Rahman, a 1st year student, department of Computer Science and Engineering, North South University asserted:

*“While I feel the profile picture of my Instagram needs to be changed, I snap selfies and post the best one on the basis of picture quality. It helps me to express my identity on social media.”*

These narratives emphasized on self-promotion, as the participants intend to express themselves on social media platforms with beautified or glorified selfies. Such selfies with joyful expressions help them to boost their social status in the digital world. They also decide about which selfies or contents they would share with whom, for instance, some selfies are appropriate to post on the social media platforms, while the others are shared in the personal chat box with the closest friends.

## **2. Reasons Behind Using Photo Editing Apps**

This theme uncovers the determinants behind selfie editing activity by the respondents. Three major factors were drawn from the data analysis.

#### **a. Filter allows to fix imperfection**

This factor highlights that young girls take selfies using filters with an intention to beautify themselves in photographs. Their responses revealed that smartphone’s artificial intelligence (AI) powered camera or beauty filters do improve the way the face looks. In order to maintain a stylish impression, they present themselves in the digital world with images that align with their idealized self, essentially not with their real self. The available photo beauty camera apps offer an instant “makeup” and false presentations with the aim of spectacularization. For instance, Nushrat Islam, a 4th year student, department of Finance, American International University-Bangladesh explained how the feature of beauty filters allow her to make false presentation by stating,

*“The beauty filters help to hide blemish from our face and make us pretty. Sometimes, my long-distance friends ask me to send selfies. As I cannot always stay in the perfect look at home, I click selfies on snapchat that support me with an instant makeup look, afterwards I share it with others. I always search for different filter apps in the Google play store to explore which effect will make me look beautiful.”*

The above finding demonstrates that the female participants are very concerned about their physical attractiveness, hence, they heavily use the filters as a strategy of reconstruction of the self. They apply photo editing apps to enhance skin quality e.g., smoothing skin, increasing brightness, and removing dark eye circle. Thus, the strong urge to gain a particular look triggers their narcissist characteristics, simultaneously the edited selfies reduce their concern about appearance and make them happy.

Surprisingly, only two out of twenty informants admitted that they look the same in real-life as they do

online. Nevertheless, the same notion of making corrections emerged while conversing with those who either prefer to show real face or abstain from using the excessive filter. For instance, Riaz Chowdhury, a 1st year student, department of Computer Science and Engineering, North South University asserted:

*“Sometimes, I edit selfies to match color contrast or to crop the image in order to get the exact size that I want. I don’t use any particular app for editing, rather I edit pictures with in-built features of my smartphone. I believe that I should represent my real face on social media.”*

The quote suggests that the male participants in particular intend to depict an image of themselves that is consistent with how they look in the real world. They apply editing software to alter the shape, brightness, shadow, and saturation of the selfie. For example, while the lighting is not optimum in their selfies, they reconstruct their desired photographs by editing or adjusting it into a perfect form. Therefore, it can be argued that the male participants probably have a feeling of discomfort in constructing exaggerated or fake appearance using the filters compared to women, as they are not accustomed to applying excessive filters to alter their real images, thereby such selfies reflect their true faces.

### **b. Filter helps to manage impression**

This factor illustrates an important disclosure about the relationship between selfie editing and posting practice in the digital world, a consistent factor across all twenty participants. According to the respondents, people must look “better” in the virtual world than they appear in real-life. In the process of reconstructing the selfie, the filters facilitate to alter the real image, consequently the reality evaporates. Nevertheless, the respondents are motivated and influenced to upload edited selfies to display their so-called ideal image, because they believe such images reflect a more favorable impression than the real self. Thus, they endeavor to manage how others view them as an impression management strategy by depicting a positive selfie to others. The photo filters also enhance the probability of receiving compliments from others for their glorified appearance. Sumaiya Ahsan, a 4th year student, department of English, Bangladesh University of Professionals asserted:

*“I snapped many selfies yesterday. As I deactivated my Facebook account for 7 days, I’m not concerned with those pictures. It means that if social media does not exist in my life, I’m not bothered about how I look in selfies.”*

The participants appreciated the usefulness of filters in producing compelling images. The above-mentioned quote points out that the respondent tend to edit selfies to achieve an ideal image, because she wants other people to perceive her in the same way. The desire to present the best self in the digital world leads them to invest considerable time and effort to edit the selfie by using filters. While they feel satisfied with the edited selfie, they proceed to share it with others. In other words, the informants apply the filters to make the image better than the raw picture in order to control positive impressions in front of the audience in the digital world. This finding is quite consistent with Goffman’s (1959) Self-Presentation theory that indicates individuals enhance a sense of self by constructing an impression to showcase in front of others.

### **c. Filters allow to heighten self-esteem**

This factor demonstrates that most of the female participants are excessively concerned about their appearance in the digital world, thereby they tend to utilize the advantages of filters to feel satisfied. Sadia Supti, a 3rd year student, department of Marketing, University of Dhaka mentioned how usage of the filters can be a good feeling.

*“The ideology of skin tone shaming exists in our society, so I feel scared toward this practice. Consequently, my unconscious mind motivates me to edit the selfie which I intend to post on social media. I believe that photo editing software increases a sense of satisfaction by removing all types of lacking from my face. When I look charming in the selfie, I feel so confident.”*

The findings reveal that the female participants worry about the possibility of getting racist responses from their fellow online friends. They feel the social pressure and unhealthy comparison that result in a sense of dissatisfaction with their appearance. Such fear and anxiety lead them to apply the filter to fix their



imperfections. Therefore, it can be argued that photo editing apps facilitate to boost their confidence and self-satisfaction by reducing concern about appearance, consequently, they become inclined toward apps to increase their self-esteem.

### 3. Determinants Behind Posting Selfies on Social Media

This theme reveals respondents' intention behind sharing selfies on multiple social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. Three major factors were found significant that stimulate the participants to publish selfies on online platforms.

#### a. Selfie is posted to receive compliments

This factor indicates that participants have an impulse to act as compliment seekers in the digital world. It was found that they long for admiration and manifestation of their glorified image. The expected number of "reactions" or "likes" on a selfie stimulates them to publish images in the digital world. But, when a selfie receives less than a substantial number of "likes", it puts their confidence in jeopardy and leads them to doubt in their positive selves. For instance, Sinthia Esha, a 2nd year student, department of Architecture, BRAC University stated:

*"If I wear makeup or a new dress for going to a party, I immediately take selfies and post them on social media. I love to get comments from my online friends like "Wow! You are so pretty!" When 100 people click the "like" button on a selfie, it makes me feel good. If I fail to get the desired amount of "likes", I feel a little bit weird. Then I realize that I might not look pretty as I thought."*

It is evident that complement is a particular form of communication that allows the participants to understand their approval and validation in the digital world. They feel a sense of happiness with the act of reacting, interacting, and engaging with their online fellows. They expressed that online users may click the like button easily, but when the users put comments, it means that they paid attention to the content, thereby compliment is more important than reaction. In the light of this circumstance, the feedback and comment function as stimulators for them to publish the selfie on social media platforms. Hence, it can be argued that the tendency of posting selfies on virtual spheres for gaining attention and admiration of others increases the narcissistic traits.

In addition, the above mentioned quote points out that when she wears makeup and dresses up well, she wants others to see this ideal version of herself. She intends to show that she has potential to look more perfect than she does in usual time, thereby she tends to post selfies. Although male participants may not consistently dress up or wear makeup, they still desire to present a positive physical appearance, therefore, selfies act as an effective tool to construct an impressive image. In this context, "like" and "comments" allow them to conceive their endorsement on the social media platform. This finding is consistent with Goffman's (1959) Self-Presentation theory that points out the presenter implicitly requests his/her audience to take seriously the impression that is created before them.

#### b. Selfie is posted to keep others updated

This factor points out that selfies serve as a tool to keep up social contacts in the digital world. It implies two-way communication between the selfie uploader and the audience or vice versa. In fact, everyone on social media is a "prosumer" – a term that denotes someone who is both a producer and a consumer. A selfie poster can manifest his or her role as an audience too. Hridoy Nawaz, a 2nd year student, department of Architecture, BRAC University reported:

*"Nowadays we are so busy that we can't talk with others in the private chat box. I post selfies on Facebook to inform online friends regarding any event happening in my life. While I upload a selfie, online friends put comments through which I can keep them updated. The world of social media should know what I'm doing in the real world."*

It can be argued that selfies act as one of the most popular mediums of digital self-expression and communication. The online selfies facilitate to let friends and followers know about the latest update of selfie

uploader. In this regard, the participants tend to upload selfies to follow new trends and maintain their online presence in the virtual world. They admitted that social media is the best venue for sharing moments of joy with others.

### **c. Selfie is uploaded to increase self-esteem**

This sub theme elucidates that most of the participants feel a sense of satisfaction after posting selfies in the virtual world. The informants asserted that selfies allow them to express digital expression, therefore, the published selfies help them to establish their self-identity to others. Asif Sarkar, a final year student, department of Finance, American International University-Bangladesh reported:

*“Sometimes I convince myself that I won’t post anything on social media. Meanwhile, I notice that someone might upload a stunning selfie taken in a lively place. Then I feel motivated to visit the same place with my friends and take selfies to post on social media platforms. It allows me to gain a sense of delight and mental peace.”*

The informants revealed that the published selfies assist them to produce impressions in front of social media users who act as the audience. They explained that confidence, inner peace, and happiness are major motivators to post selfies in the digital world. They are inclined to engage in self-presentation behavior which in turn indicates the feeling of self-worth. As a result, the online selfie on social media platforms appears as an online space of self-gratification. In consideration of the analysis, it explores that the act of selfie publishing behavior increases their level of self-esteem, as they experience a sense of confidence and satisfaction.

## **4. Reasons Behind Keeping Offline Selfies**

This study considers offline selfies as the pictures that participants neither share on social media nor delete, rather they prefer to keep those selfies on smartphones or other storage spaces. This theme shows two factors related to the relevance and significance of selfies that participants prefer to keep offline.

### **a. Defective selfies are unpublished**

Findings show that selfies are sorted out for sharing on social media based on appearance, background, quality, and timeliness. In this screening process, defective or imperfect selfies are kept as offline selfies. Sadia Supti, a 3rd year student, department of Marketing, University of Dhaka explained:

*“If I realize that my expression or attire doesn’t seem perfect in the selfie, I never post this type of picture on social media. Rather, I delete most of them and keep a few of them in the storage space as a precious memory.”*

When selfies do not come out as impressive, but still contain a precious moment, these sorts of ordinary pictures are stored in a storage drive. According to the participants, such ordinary selfies cannot contribute to building their ideal image in the social media world. Moreover, they believe that those selfies might not get validation and appreciation in the digital world, thereby they abstain themselves from uploading this type of pictures.

### **b. Selfie with privacy concerns is always private**

This factor reveals that participants are uncomfortable to post selfies with private moments on online platforms. For example, Tasnim Raisha, a master’s student, department of English, Bangladesh University of Professionals expressed the need of keeping personal moment offline:

*“I live in a hostel. Sometimes I take funny selfies with my roommates. Last week, I met with my boyfriend in a restaurant and captured a very intimate moment. I tend to share this sort of selfie in the private chat box instead of posting them on social media due to privacy concerns. I prefer to keep those offline selfies as precious moments.”*

The participants decide which selfies to share on the basis of a particular circumstance. The specific type of selfies having privacy concerns are inappropriate to publish in the digital world. Rather, such personal selfies are only to be shared with close friends and these are typically stored offline.

## 5. Gender Differences in Selfie-Related Behaviors

This theme outlines participants' experiences and point of views on the underlying gender factors influencing the practice of selfie culture. Two factors were drawn from the data analysis.

### a. Women take more selfies than man

This factor shows that all the participants unanimously agreed based on their personal experience that women tend to take more selfies than men. Niloy Antu, a master's student, department of English, Bangladesh University of Professionals stated:

*"I was present at the marriage ceremony of my friend last week. About 10 to 15 friends went there. Surprisingly, my female friends became so busy in taking selfies! I was extremely annoyed because they invested around 2 hours just to snap selfies. It seemed quite weird to me."*

The respondents regardless of their gender identity admitted that both men and women take selfies for self-presentation purposes, but women are more likely to click selfies compared to men. They observed that almost all users post selfies on Facebook, but particularly the women uploaded selfies as an everyday occurrence. Abundant comments and reactions are counted while female users post selfies. The participants highlighted that women are predominant in the selfie-related activities. They were skeptical about the fact that a selfie mirrors women's real face, as most of the online users intend to create a false reality of themselves in the digital world.

### b. Beautification allures women more than men

This factor indicates that female participants tend to emphasize on the beautification aspect of selfies more than their male counterparts. They argued that "beautification" is firmly associated with the feature of selfie. Priyanka Ferdousi, a final year student, department of Finance, American International University-Bangladesh stated:

*"People tend to look a little bit more attractive in the front camera compared to the back camera of a smartphone. We always intend to represent ourselves in a glamorized way. In this context, selfie is the best platform for us to look pretty."*

It was found from their responses that smartphones have built-in artificial intelligence powered beauty face features for the front camera, that make skin smooth and bright. The filter apps alter the complexion of color and face cutting that tend to shadow their real look. Traditional social norms regard beauty as an integral part of women's identity, similarly, smartphone front camera allows its users to construct a beautified look which is to some extent aligned and interlinked with the stereotypical standpoint. Such ideology of social construction can lead women to an increased reliance on selfies, because social media platforms are used and accessible in traditional societies as well. Hence, it can be argued that traditional viewpoints can influence selfie-related behaviors among women which drive them to construct a "revised look" and fix their imperfection.

## 6. Key Findings and Discussion

### a. Selfie selection, editing, and posting process

This study reveals that selfies are only posted on social media platforms when the participants feel satisfied with their appearance. Otherwise, they tend to edit the selfies to meet the imagined parameters and decide whether or not the photographs would be published in the digital world. If the edited version of the selfies is unlikely to align with their expectation, then offline selfies are kept in the storage space as a memory reminiscence. Interestingly, YouCam Perfect, BeautyPlus, AirBrush, Snapchat, and Instagram are the most preferred photographic filters among women which allow them to manipulate the selfie and represent a constructed reality in the virtual world. Most of the participants justify the tendency of using filters as trendy, fashionable, popular, and effective tools, while a few of them heavily condemn the behavior of using filters among the females for having changed appearances.

## **b. Gender differences in selfie-related behaviors**

This research points out that a significant gender difference exists in self-related behaviors of male and female. It was found that female participants tend to snap more selfies, apply photographic filters, and post them in the virtual world than their male counterparts. They invest time and effort in dressing, make-up, snapping, editing, and uploading selfies on social media only to look more glamorous than their real appearance. Moreover, they prefer to use filters to remove pimples, spots, and dark circles in order to make the skin tone bright and flawless. On the contrary, male participants are more likely to crop selfies, brighten the image, and match the color contrast. Interestingly, the majority of female participants upload their selfies on social media to receive compliments about their appearance, while the majority of male participants do so to keep online friends and followers updated about their recent activities.

## **c. Relationship between selfie with narcissism and self-esteem**

As mentioned earlier, narcissism refers to a sense of grandiosity and a desire to grab attention and admiration of others (Thomaes, Brummelman, Reijntjes, & Bushman, 2013). The findings similarly demonstrate an unusual expectation of the selected respondents regarding selfies. A strong urge to gain the attention of online friends motivates them to share selfies on social media. They upload selfies to seek reaction, admiration, and compliment from the virtual world which eventually triggers their narcissist characteristics. These narcissistic traits lead them to spend a considerable amount of time and effort on their make-up, dressing, and appearance before snapping selfies.

The initial discussion marks self-esteem as a feeling of satisfaction about an individual's own character that reflects the relationship between one's self-image and one's ideal self-image (Silber & Tippett, 1965). In relation to the underlying reasons behind selfie editing and selfie posting activities, the respondents experience a sense of confidence, mental peace, and satisfaction. They also admitted that they are concerned about their appearance and edited selfies reduce their anxiety. Hence, selected selfies are edited and then posted on social media which drive them to rely on photo editing apps to improve their images. In consideration of the analysis, it is clear that people with low self-esteem edit their selfie to align with their idealized self-image in order to gain a sense of satisfaction. As a result, they consistently apply photographic filters to upgrade their self-esteem.

## **d. Application of the theory in this study**

Applying Goffman's (1959) Self-Presentation theory, this study explored four key steps of the so-called 'selfie culture'. Firstly, the participants snap selfies to capture themselves in the photograph. Secondly, they apply photographic filters that allow them to enhance their appearance than their actual look in the selfies as an impression management strategy. Thirdly, they share the retouched selfies on the social media platform to display an idealized image as a self-presentation motive. Finally, they attempt to seek attention, admiration, and compliment for their glorified appearance on social media.

To summarize, four foremost determinants behind taking selfies are: (1) to capture elegant appearance, (2) to have fun, (3) to freeze moment, (4) to share with others; three major determinants for editing selfies are: (1) to fix imperfection, (2) to manage impression, (3) to heighten self-esteem; three main reasons for posting selfies are: (1) to gain compliments, (2) to keep others updated, (3) to increase self-esteem.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research examined a relationship between selfie and self-presentation strategy. It is apparent that this study exemplified multiple grounds that play a crucial role in shaping, editing, and posting selfies in the digital world. The evidence brought up by interviews testified that a significant gender difference exists in selfie-related behaviors. The results unveiled that the urge to gain attention and admiration of others on social media are associated with narcissist traits. Such narcissistic behavior is further endorsed by excessive editing of self-portraits. Simultaneously, individuals with lower self-esteem tend to invest effort to look better than their actual appearance. Therefore, it can be stated that individuals higher in narcissism and lower in self-

esteem are particularly involved in excessive selfie-related activities.

This research has limitations that should be addressed. Firstly, this research applied neither NPI (Narcissistic Personality Inventory) nor RSES (Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale) to measure the exact level of narcissistic and self-esteem traits. Consequently, it could not measure to what extent the narcissistic or self-esteem traits exist in selfie-related behaviors. Secondly, the sample size included only youth, who live in Dhaka city, but other demographic groups may have different patterns of selfie culture. Hence, future researchers may conduct a comparative study between different countries to sketch a broader view of selfie culture. Examination of different age groups adopting online observation, longitudinal study, survey, and focus group discussion might open up a wider overview into the selfie related-behaviors.

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