

Impact of Fear of Rejection and Mentalization on Selfie Posting Behaviour and Islamic Psychological Wellbeing

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Abstract

The study aimed to explore the impact of fear of rejection and mentalization on selfie posting behavior and psychological wellbeing. A total of 232 students were randomly selected from two universities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. It was the correlational research design. Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire for Adults, Reflective Functioning Questionnaire, Selfitis Behavior Scale, and Ryff's Psychological Wellbeing Scale were applied. The findings of the study showed that the fear of rejection is positively associated with selfie posting behavior ($r=.072$; $p<.05$) whereas it is negatively associated with psychological wellbeing ($r=-.042$; $p<0.05$). Furthermore, the results provide evidence of mentalization being positively related with psychological wellbeing ($r=.062$; $p<.05$) and negatively related with selfie posting behavior ($r=-.059$; $p<.05$). Regression analysis showed that 9% of variance in selfie posting behavior is due to rejection sensitivity and mentalization. Moreover, 8% of variance in psychological wellbeing is due to rejection sensitivity and mentalization. This research contributes towards literature by investigating the consequences of these variables on selfie posting behavior and psychological wellbeing of the individual.

Keywords: *Fear of Rejection, Selfie Posting Behavior, Psychological Wellbeing, Sensitivity, Mentalization*

Introduction

During the past few decades, social media usage has remarkably varied from an extremely entertaining to fully integrated part of nearly every aspect of life. The online world has altered intensely in the last decade. According to Obsert (2010), youngsters are now sharing thoughts, sentiments, personal details and images at a completely impressive pace.

Lately, the enormous use of social media has become a worldwide phenomenon. It began as a

hobby for some people with computer literacy, and has now become a social practice and a way of life for people all over the world (Boyd,2007).

Social media has become widespread, giving new generation a complete new way to relate with each other and communicate with the world. Social media has gained tremendous growth and popularity around the world and many researchers are now eager to understand more about these social media sites and how they affect society. Today's youth experience both positive and harmful effects from using social media. The positive impact includes updating youth about the events around the world and allowing them to stay in touch with their peers and friends without even having any physical encounters. Although social media sites seem to connect and update more people, this leads towards isolation. The social isolation can have a number of consequences, such as physical, emotional and psychological problems in young people. It can cause depression, anxiety and many other problems (Barkley,2011).

Social media, and in particular 'selfie posting' are fully embedded in the lives of young people. Selfies seems as a two-edged phenomenon. Taking and posting selfies has developed habit of nearly every individual. It is immensely prevalent and almost not possible to visit any site on social media without the selfies of our close friends. A selfie is a self-portrait snapshot made with a (phone) camera held in the hand or arm and directed at a mirror that is frequently shared on social media (Sorokowski et al., 2015)". However, the global prevalence of selfies is not accessible, the estimates in existing literature of selfie statistics are impressive. As, *Google* statistics show that approximately 93 billion selfies are taken daily –that's only *Android phone users count*. (Brandt, 2014)

Between 2004 and 2006, social media websites become wide spread after the creation of Facebook and Myspace. Facebook has more than 60 Million users and its number is still growing and according to some researches 85% of the Facebook users are students. These findings are not only true for Facebook; Instagram closely follow these numbers in the recent years (University of

Hampshire, 2009). Lately, Facebook has been heavily replaced by the use of Instagram. According to the statistics, Instagram is the second most popular media platform among adolescents from age 13 to 17 years which account for 72 % of the population after YouTube that makes up 85% of the total population using social media (Anderson and Jiang, 2018).

Instagram stands apart from other social media platforms because it is the only well-known platform that focuses solely on sharing photographs. Individual can take or upload photographs, manipulate them with filters, cropping and other effects, add captions, or "tag" people in photos. Additionally, users can view up to 6 images created and shared on their social networks by others and "comment" or "like" peoples' images that appear in their "feed".

The Instagram feature of photo filters is crucial. Forward et al.'s (2015) study examined the results of using photo filters on the images. Finding out about personality traits is made simpler when many people publish their photos online. Researchers gathered 22,398 Instagram photos for their study, and 113 participants completed personality questionnaires. The findings showed that users' photo editing choices reflect their personality and self-presentation.

Seehafer (2017), attempted to use the Instagram to discuss the notion of self so that people depict themselves. In his qualitative research, he used Goffman's (1959) analytical model of impression control and performance. Eleven women who were active Instagram users were interviewed. These interviews were followed by the main topic of "face value". In addition, it was revealed that presentation of self was handled using photo, using filters and titles written on photographs to create a whole Instagram impression. Nevertheless, it has been found that the management and performance of personal impressions are also related.

Although Instagram can provide a variety of positive effects, such as self-expression, time lapse, and entertainment, it has also reported various adverse effects related to Instagram usage (Kirkaburun et al. 2018). Of the five platforms (YouTube Snapchat Facebook, Twitter),

Instagram was reported to have the most detrimental effects for the mental health and well-being of an individual's according to the recent report in 2015 by UK Royal Society for Public Health.

Instagram has gained immense attention of researchers due to increased use of it with the passage of time. Lately, the researchers are interested to know how social media more specifically instagram affects the individual's life. Researchers explore wide range of behaviours associated with the use of social media however, many research questions are still open for the researchers to explore the factors that might lead towards the use of instagram.

Methods and Materials

The correlational research design was used using quantitative methodology. In this study 232 university students with age ranges between 18 to 29 were selected. The participants were selected using purposive sampling from two universities i.e. COMSATS and ARID. The inclusion criteria for the participant was that a student must have a smart phone with camera that is functioning and they must have a social media application instagram in their phone. Permission letter was drafted to collect data from different universities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Before participation, informed consent of the participants was taken. The participants were informed about the research and its purpose.

Instruments

A questionnaire was used consisting of items relating to address basic demographic information about Gender, Age, Institutions' name of the individuals along with social media usage time.

Rejection Sensitivity Scale

Rejection Sensitivity Scale is a 9 items scale developed by Berenson and Downey in 2013. It is a 6-point Likert scale and it scoring ranges from *very unconcerned* (1) to *very concerned* (6). The participants responded to the series of hypothetical statements about the anxiety they feel in

response to each situation. In addition to this, individuals also responded to series of statement by presuming the possibility how other individual would respond on 6 point Likert scale and it's scoring ranges from *very unlikely* (1) to *very likely* (6). The test retest reliability of the scale was .83(Downey & Feldman,1996). Moreover, the variable has been measured both in a continuous manner and as a dichotomy. Individuals having score more than median are highly sensitive to rejection whereas those who score less than median are less sensitive to rejection.

Reflective Functioning Questionnaire

The scale was developed in 2016 by Fonagy et al. It is 8 items scale that measures one's ability to recognize and interprets other's deliberate mental state A 7-point Likert scale with a *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7) range is used. After reading each statement, the participants were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with it. It also has two subscales named certainty of mental states and uncertainty of mental states. Test-retest reliability was .75 for the subscale measuring mental state uncertainty, whereas .84 for the subscale measuring mental state certainty (Badoud, et al, 2015).

Selfitis Behavior Scale

It was developed by Balakrishnan and Griffiths in 2017. It is a 20 item scale which is meant to measure the Selfitis behavior. The score range for this 5-point Likert scale is from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). It consists of six subscales i.e. environmental enhancement, social competition, attention seeking, mood modification, self-confidence and subjective conformity. The test retest reliability is .86 which shows it is a reliable scale (Balakrishnan & Griffiths,2017).

Ryff's Psychological Wellbeing Scale

This scale was developed by Carol D. Ryff in 1989. The scale evaluates the six elements of wellness and happiness. According to Ryff et al (2007), the scale evaluates six characteristics

such as autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with other, purpose in life and self- acceptance (Ryff, et al,2007). The scoring ranges from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (6) on a 6-point Likert scale. For all of the subscales, the test-retest reliability of the scale ranged from 0.78 to 0.97 (Ahmet,2008).

Statistical Analysis

Analysis of research was conducted using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) XXV. Analysis was done at two levels. To establish psychometrics properties of scales, Alpha coefficient reliability was computed. To find out the association between fear of rejection, mentalization and posting selfie correlation analysis was conducted. Regression analysis was computed to see the impact of fear of rejection and mentalization on selfie posting and psychological wellbeing. These variables were also evaluated across different demographic characteristics of the sample.

Table 1*

Demographic Characteristics of Sample (N=232)

Table 2*

Psychometric properties for SBS, RSS, RFQ, PWB and subscales.

Table 3*

Correlation among all variables (N=232)

Table 4*

Mean, Standard deviation and t-values for Selfitis behavior, psychological wellbeing, rejection sensitivity and reflective functioning on the basis of gender. (N=232)

Table 5*

Regression analysis of fear of rejection and mentalization on selfie posting behavior (N=232)

Table 6*

Regression analysis of fear of rejection and mentalization on psychological wellbeing

(N=232)

***All tables are placed at the end**

Discussion

Observing the excessive use of an Instagram and other social media sites with in all kind of users especially students of universities it is important to study the factors affecting use of instagram in this population. The current study intended to investigate how fear of rejection and mentalization impact selfie posting behavior on instagram. It also explores the link between selfie posting behavior and its impact on and how this behavior affects the psychological wellbeing of an individual. The study's findings add to the body of knowledge on Instagram use and students' perceptions of Instagram use. According to researches gender is associated with some of the selfie-related behaviours. However, findings from these researches need more clarification into gender disparities in online selfies, as Dhir, 2016 reported that females posted more selfies as compared to males, which is in contradiction with the results described by Guo et al in 2018. It has been presumed that publishing selfies is a gendered activity (Albury,2015). Earlier research on gender variations in selfie posting behaviour revealed disparities between male and female selfie posting (Boursier & Mannan,2018; Dhir,2016: Qiu, Lu, Yang ,2015, Sorokowski,2016). This study examines whether gender associates with selfie posting behavior or not. The present study used the students of two different universities as a sample including both males and females to explore the gender differences among selfie posting behavior. In accordance with the literature, results showed that the female posts more selfies than males. Selfies are more popular among females even though they are more prone than boys to view selfie as a potentially harmful

practice and worry about the outcomes of posting them. Boys, on the other hand, frequently view selfies and online exposure in general as a means of self-promotion. This is consistent with Kim and Chock's (2015) research on the role of popularity in influencing male selfie behaviour, which was also supported by Dhir and Torsheim's (2016) study on photo-tagging among boys. Our research suggests that boys and girls have quite different expectations for selfies and that gender clearly influences selfie behaviour. Cultural norms and social distinctions between boys and females should be taken into account (Doring et al. ,2016).

Correlational analysis was computed to see if there is any relationship between the variables and the result showed that there is a significant relationship between variables. Selfie posting behavior is shown to be negatively correlated with psychological wellbeing. This is consistent with previous researches as according to Stefanone (2011), social media use is connected with the adverse effects on one's wellbeing. As it provides a platform where individuals continue to compare themselves with others. Moreover, they are also exposed to unrealistic standards of beauty expectations which result in decrease in body image satisfaction. Tiggerman and Slater (2013), selfies are taken from flattering angles, using bright lights and editing it with different tools in order to have impression on others and decreasing their perceived flaws. This results in decrease satisfaction with their own body appearance which eventually lead towards low psychological wellbeing.

Regression analysis was computed to see the effects of fear of rejection and mentalization has on selfie posting behavior and psychological wellbeing. The result showed that 9% of variance in selfie posting behavior is due to rejection sensitivity and mentalization whereas 8% of variance in psychological wellbeing is due to rejection sensitivity and mentalization. It is consistent with previous researches that teenagers are involve in selfie posting behavior because they want to become members of online world and when they didn't get desired "likes" or

“comments” on their photos they became depressed (Auer,2018). Another study reported that those who have high levels of rejection sensitivity posts more selfies (Nancy,2018).

There were some limitations in this study. The first limitation was that all the measure used in this study were self-reported. With self-reported measures, it is possible that the participants try to give answers in somewhat subjective ways for various reasons. It is possible that the participant might try to answer in a more positive way. In addition, the understanding of the participant himself or herself or their circumstances can also differ substantially from another participant.

Conclusion

The findings have clinical implications for the prevention and treatment of psychological problems people faced due to excessive use of social media. Individual who took selfies are reported to have high levels of fear of rejection and low levels of reflective functioning. A significant concern regarding social media and wellbeing is raised because of these findings. The frequency of selfie taking and posting behavior should be considering a risky online health related behavior especially if it is triggered by body image dissatisfaction or any appearance related behavior. There is a need of the hour for interventions to eliminate the harmful effects of social media on psychological wellbeing.

It helps us to understand what types of gratification and needs led towards Instagram addiction and therefore it aids in designing addiction prevention. These findings suggest that in order to reduce student usage of Instagram, parents and educational policy makers should foster a sense of psychological wellness among students. The government might undertake educational and training initiatives to improve parents' understanding of social media use. Additionally, education policy makers can significantly improve wellness in universities by implementing intervention approaches like mindfulness meditation and cognitive behaviour therapy.

Declaration of Interest Statement

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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Table 1**Demographic Characteristics of Sample (N=232)*

Variables	N	%
Gender		
Male	107	45.7
Female	125	53.4
Age		
18-23	123	52.6
24-29	109	46.6
Marital status		
Single	172	73.5
Married	60	25.6
Family System		
Nuclear	174	75.6
Joint	58	24.2
Education		
Psychology	115	49.1
Environmental	117	50.0
Sciences		
University		
COMSATS	115	49.1
ARID	117	50.0
No. of selfies posted		
1-4 per day	89	38.36
5-8 per day	143	61.63
Duration of Instagram		
account	97	41.8
3-4 years		
5-6 years	135	58.2

Note. N=232 (n=sample size for each category).

Table 1 showed the demographic characteristics of the total sample. The sample mostly consisted of age range 18-23 which is 52.6%.and whereas sample with age range 24-29 comprised 46.6% of the total sample. As for the gender, males comprised of the 45.7 % of the sample whereas female consisted of 53.2% of the total sample. The sample was also categorized on the bases of marital status, in which the percentage of unmarried students were high which is 73.5% whereas married students accounted for the 25% of the sample. On the basis of education and

university almost equal amount of students were taken from the universities as student from COMSATS comprised 49% of the total sample whereas students from ARID comprised 51% of the sample. Similarly, psychology student made 49.1% of the sample whereas environmental sciences student made 51.1% of the total sample. According to the duration of an instagram account and most of the students had an Instagram account from past 5-6 years. On the basis of selfie posted per day most of the sample posted approximately 5-8 per days' selfies per day which accounted for the 61.63% of the sample.

Table 2*

Psychometric properties for SBS, RSS, RFQ, PWB and subscales.

Scale	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	Cronbach's α
Selfitis Behavior Scale	58.50	5.41	5-100	.86
Environmental-Enhancement	11.78	2.32	5-20	.70
Social Competition	11.98	1.95	5-20	.75
Attention Seeking	8.59	1.92	5-20	.70
Mood Modification	8.89	1.99	5-20	.72
Self-Confidence	8.86	1.78	5-20	.77
Subjective Conformity	8.56	1.87	5-20	.70
Rejection Sensitivity Scale	11.31	6.60	1-36	.84
Reflective Functioning Questionnaire	35.58	5.57	7-56	.744
RFQ_c	14.35	2.31	7-28	.71
RFQ_u	3.1	0.67	7-28	.70

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Psychological wellbeing Scale	37	56.	7.67	7-126	.83
Autonomy	2	9.5	2.31	7-21	.81
Environmental Mastery	7	9.7	1.98	7-21	.82
Personal Growth	8	9.3	2.16	7-21	.81
Positive Relations	1	9.4	1.73	7-21	.82
Purpose in life	9	9.3	1.78	7-21	.82
Self-Acceptance	7	8.8	2.36	7-21	.81

Reliability analysis was conducted to compute the alpha coefficient of the scales used in this study. The alpha coefficient for Selfitis behavior scale was 0.86 whereas the alpha coefficient of Rejection Sensitivity Scale was 0.84. Similarly, the alpha coefficient for Reflective functioning and Psychological wellbeing scale was 0.74 and 0.83 respectively. So, the reliability analysis showed that the scale used in this study were reliable.

Table 3*

Correlation among all variables (N=232)

Variable	1	2	3	4
SB	-	-	.072**	-.059*
		.042**		
PWB	-	-	-.047*	.062
RS	-	-	-	-.023*
RF	-	-	-	-

*Note; *correlation is significant at 0.05 level; **correlation is significant at 0.01 level; SB; Selfitis Behavior, PWB; Psychological wellbeing, RS; Rejection Sensitivity RF; Reflective Functioning*

Correlational analysis was conducted to find out any possible correlation among variables. There was a significant negative correlation among selfie posting behavior and psychological wellbeing of the individual ($r=-.042$, $N=232$, $p<.001$, two tailed). Moreover, the selfie posting behavior was positively correlated with the rejection sensitivity ($r=.072$, $p<.001$, $N=232$, two tailed). There was significant negative correlation between selfie posting behavior and reflective functioning ($r=-.059$, $p<0.05$, $N=232$, two tailed). There was a significant negative correlation between psychological wellbeing and rejection sensitivity ($r=-.047$, $p<0.05$, $N=232$, two tailed). There was no significant correlation between psychological wellbeing and reflective functioning ($r=.062$, $p<0.05$, $N=232$, two tailed). Moreover, rejection sensitivity was negatively correlated with reflective functioning ($r=.023$, $p<0.05$, $N=232$, two tailed).

Table 4*

Mean, Standard deviation and t-values for Selfitis behavior, psychological wellbeing, rejection sensitivity and reflective functioning on the basis of gender.

s	Variable	Male			<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's d
	Female						
		M	SD	M			
	SD						
	SB	48.02	3.55	58.02	-	.0	2.
		5.55			1.24	21	10
	PWB	56.21	7.20	50.03	-	.0	1.
		4.32			.239	16	04
	RS	10.31	1.44	12.86	1.	.0	0.
		1.62			09	12	51
	RF	17.72	3.43	15.31	1.	.0	0.
		1.23			03	02	93

Note: SB; Selfitis behavior, PWB: Psychological Wellbeing, RS: Rejection Sensitivity & RF: Reflective Functioning
 $p<0.05$

An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the selfie posting behavior for

males and females. There was a significant difference in the scores for males ($M=48.02$, $SD=3.55$) and for females ($M=58.02$, $SD=5.55$) conditions; $t(232) = -1.24$, $p=.021$. These results suggested that the gender had effect on selfie posting behavior and female posts more selfies as compared to males. The cohen's d value of 2.10 indicated that the effect size was large. In this table t-test was also conducted to compare the psychological wellbeing score for the gender. There was a significant difference in the scores for males ($M=56.21$, $SD=7.20$) and for female ($M=50.035$, $SD=4.32$), conditions; $t(232) = -.23$, $p=.016$. These results suggested that gender had an effect on psychological wellbeing and males have more psychological wellbeing as compared to females. The cohen's d value of 1.04 indicated that the effect size was large. As shown in the table, rejection sensitivity and reflective functioning for both group was also compared. For rejection sensitivity, there was a significant difference in the scores for males ($M=10.31$, $SD=1.44$) and for females ($M=12.86$, $SD=1.62$), conditions; $t(232) = 1.09$, $p=.012$. These results suggested that the gender had an effect on rejection sensitivity perception and females were more prone towards rejection sensitivity as compared to the males. The cohen's d value of 0.51 indicated that the effect size was medium. Similarly, for reflective functioning, there was a significant difference in the scores for males ($M=17.72$, $SD=3.43$) and for female ($M=15.31$, $SD=1.23$), conditions; $t(232) = 1.03$, $p=.002$. The cohen's d value of 0.93 indicated that the effect size was large for both groups.

Table 5*

Regression analysis of fear of rejection and mentalization on selfie posting behavior

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>	95% CI
RS	.258	.236	1.09	.000	[-.20,.724]

RF	-.120	.137	1.23	.001	[-
					.14,.389]

Note: CI=Confidence Interval; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$; $R^2 = .09$

Regression analysis was computed to explore the predictive nature of rejection sensitivity and mentalization on selfie posting behavior. A significant equation was found $F(2,230) = 2.34$, $p < 0.05$ with an R^2 of .09. R^2 suggested that 9% of variance in dependent variable i.e. selfie posting behavior was due to rejection sensitivity and reflective functioning. According to the table, one-unit increase in rejection sensitivity will result in .258 units increase in selfie posting behavior. Moreover, one-unit increase in reflective functioning will decrease the selfie posting behavior by .120 units.

Table 6*

Regression analysis of fear of rejection and mentalization on psychological wellbeing

Varia	B	SE	t	P	95%
ble					CI
RS	-.41	.33	-1.24	.000	[-
					1.04,.24]
RF	.04	.19	-.234	.002	[-
					.42,.33]

Note: CI=Confidence Interval; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$; $R^2 = .084$

Regression analysis was computed to explore the predictive nature of rejection sensitivity and mentalization on psychological wellbeing. A significant equation was found $F(2,230) = 3.34$, $p < 0.05$ with an R^2 of .084. R^2 suggested that 8% of variance in dependent variable i.e. psychological wellbeing was due to rejection sensitivity and reflective functioning. According to the table, one-unit increase in rejection sensitivity will result in .41 units decrease in

psychological wellbeing. Moreover, one-unit increase in reflective functioning will increase the psychological wellbeing by .04 units.



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