

# EXAMINING INTENSITY OF USE: A CASE OF FUNNY SELFIES

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## ABSTRACT

*We have been observing a prominent drift for last few years across various social media networks. Clicking own photographs (“Selfies”) and sharing them across social media networks is on the rise among people. And, this typical change in behavior is not restricted here, but users are making use of many online tools (free / paid) to add fun aspect to the photographs. This type of self-posing behavior is becoming quite prominent among people of all ages; therefore, it is of great interest to know the motivations behind this type of behavior. To get some insights about this, study examined predictor (determinants) of funny selfie sharing behavior of people across various social media networks. A conceptual model, that incorporates narcissism, gratifications-sought, sensation seeking, sense of humor, and intensity of use is proposed and empirically tested by employing structural equation modeling. Results show that meta-message sensitivity, attitude towards humor and entertainment and relaxation needs are the significant predictors of an individual's intention to share funny selfies on various social media network sites. Implications of the results are deliberated with future scope for research.*

**Keywords:** Narcissism, Gratifications-Sought, Sensation Seeking, Sense of Humor, Intensity of Use, Funny Selfies, Structural Equation Modeling.

## INTRODUCTION

In the second decade of twentieth century, sharing text messages and other content is not that much in practice, rather sharing of pictures, audios, videos has become quite common and popular among masses. If we just glance through past few years, the change is humongous. The whole credit goes to the popularity of smartphones and also affordable and fast internet services available to the consumers. Social media has just changed the way we communicate, share and interact with each other. Selfie got a lot of popularity across all age groups people and has attained the esteemed title for “*Oxford Dictionaries Word of the Year 2013.*”

Clicking selfies by adjusting to different angles has become a trend and there is no limit to this. There are numerous applications available free of cost to the users for applying editing to the photographs (selfies) and converting these into selfies with visual humors / audio-video humors (amusing background music / tunes). The creativity is not stopping here, but sharing these special effect selfies across social networking sites has becomes talk of the town. The younger generation specifically has become obsessed with this trend of sharing creative selfies and it had led to a new emerging phenomenon.

A few years back only, this phenomenon got attention of researchers. Earlier, selfie was called as self-portrait. According to Yeh (2007), the roots of selfie goes to Japan. A Japanese term ‘*Self-portraiture*’ is believed to have given birth to it. To share photographs online, Wang (2009) used the Japanese term ‘*Internet self-portraiture*’. Online sharing of photographs and videos is a type of self-disclosure (Stefanoe & Lackaff, 2009). The choice of profile pictures for

social network sites users is made on the basis of physical attractiveness (Siibak, 2009). If we refer to our own experiences, there is high probability that the same principle applies for selfie sharing. According to Ridgway & Clayton, (2016), body appearance satisfaction is linked with more selfie posting across social network sites (e.g. Instagram). Because of this hype, selfie is related with '*A symptom of social media-driven narcissism*' (Pearlman, 2013).

Literature focused attractiveness aspect of selfies, but research on funny selfies is not plenty. Funny selfie tries to differentiate entertaining part from attractive part. Although, every one puts efforts in exhibiting all well about himself / herself, what may be the incentives to share selfies highlighting funny aspects of an individual's personality? It is quite clear that sharing selfies has been considered a mode of self-expression. Nevertheless, funny selfies never exhibit attractiveness and self-gratification. So it becomes quite intuitive to understand the motives behind sharing of funny selfies. Based on this background, this study intends to examine the determinants of sharing funny selfies across online social networking sites.

## **The Review of Literature**

UGT (Uses and Gratifications Theory) highlighted the rational and logic behind the selection of a particular media by the users (Klapper, 1963). Later, Rosengren, (1974) identified various factors which impact use of media by the users. The identified factors were such as; needs, motives, and expectations of users about mediated communication, social environment and psychological conditions of individuals. According to Lee & Ma (2012), users seek various types of gratifications from social network sites such as; entertainment, information (seeking and sharing), socialization and status. Nov et al., (2009) studied gratifications for online photo sharing and listed them such as; enjoyment, social relationships maintenance, reminding of individual and collective experiences, self-development / expression / presentation, and task performance.

The six main drives for sharing photographs across social network sites in digital form include; social influence, information sharing, affection, disclosure, habitual pastime, and attention seeking (Malik et al., 2016). Across various social networking sites, Snapchat performs better than Facebook and Instagram in terms of immediacy, amusement, and leisure of sharing (Roesner, et al., 2014). This argument about Snapchat was further backed by (Piwek & Joinson 2016). Authors confirmed based on empirical results that Snapchat was preferred over other social network sites for sharing funny content including photographs with a focus on faces.

Sharing funny selfies depicts comical shade of your personality (David, 2015). This study analyzed selfies shared by teenagers on one of the social network sites namely Snapchat. Author highlighted that sticking to the image of elegance, style, and sophistication is no longer priority among users. They believe in highlighting fun part of life to enjoy. Earlier, Wang (2009) interpreted good looking selfies as expression of prevailing normative institutional values.

Generally, online audience of individuals accept those selfies which are high on social quotient. Whereas, this aspect is relaxed in case of funny selfies. Caillois & Barash (2001) defined mimicry as creation of funny photographs and videos with the help of graphics (computer), decorative material. Through mimicry, a virtual character is highlighted to show imaginary world the different personality type. By impersonating others and using different effects, these funny selfie lovers expect to separate themselves from crowd for getting relief from stress and related problems. Making funny selfies can be categorized as self-enhancing humor as these are made intentionally.

According to Martin et al., (2003), self-enhancing humor is a particular humor style which highlights the comical outlook on life and people pose themselves as happy even in the situation of hardship. Self-enhancing humor is also meticulously associated to the concept of coping humor (Martin, 1996) and emotion regulation (Lefcourt et al., 1995). Chen (2014) conducted an empirical research to explore humor spread over internet and found that users are turning to producers of humor from just being consumers of comics. Author named it a new form of expression by the users of internet.

## **Narcissism**

According to DeWall et al., (2011), Narcissism can be defined as

*“A personality trait reflecting a grandiose and inflated self-concept marked by self-promotion, vanity, and grandiosity”.*

Authors further argued that narcissists always want to be center of attraction. Explicitly, narcissism is related with supremacy, an affirmative and magnified self-view of an individual in terms of intelligence, power, and physical attractiveness (Bleske-Rechek, et al., 2008). Physical appearance is of paramount importance for more narcissistic individuals in comparison to less narcissistic individuals are (Vazire et al., 2008). Gbriel et al., (1994) highlighted that it is highly likely that due to overestimation of physical attractiveness, narcissists post unattractive selfies.

Narcissists engage themselves in such types of activities, which help them in grabbing attention of others (Buss & Chiodo, 1991). Authors further probed about methods adopted by these types of individuals to get attention and concluded that flaunting money power, criticism for the sake of showing uniqueness etc. are a few of them. Sorokowska et al., (2016) found significant positive correlation between online selfie-sharing behavior and social exhibitionism. Funny selfie sharing behavior is an effective and efficient method of seeking attention of others, therefore narcissists will not bother about their image and presume to grasp others' attention by doing so.

## **Sense of Humor**

Ruch & Carrell, (1998) defined sense of humor as *“Humor as a stable personality trait or a temperament”*. Good sense of humor is a reflection of creativity, emotional stability, friendliness, intelligence, interest, and pleasing (Kaufman et al., 2007; O'Quin & Derks, 1997). Greater autonomy, high optimism, self-acceptance and self-confidence are required personae among people with better sense of humor (Kuiper & Martin 1998). Exhibition and sense of humor were found significantly related with positive correlation coefficient (Thorson & Powell, 1993). This type of relationship inspires them to become public face.

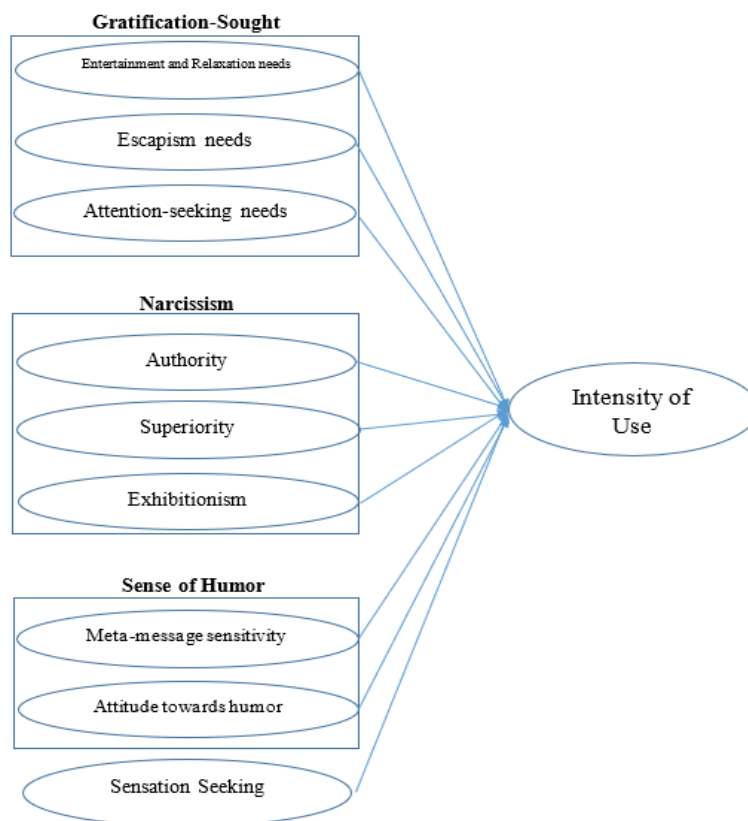
According to Svebak (2010), sense of humor is a two-dimensional construct. The two-dimensions are meta-message sensitivity and attitude towards humor. Perceptions about these type of personalities varies across individuals. Some may show respect and cherish them, but other may consider them negligent and untrustworthy. Both of these are indispensable dimensions when considering them in the context of generating funny selfies as well as the disposition to share them.

### Sensation Seeking

*“Sensation seeking may be defined as a biologically based personality trait that describes individuals’ characteristic preferences for and willingness to search for novel, varied, and intense stimuli” (Zuckerman, 1979).*

According to Nater et al. (2005), sensation seekers incline to select tend to select exciting and poignant content. Authors further added that these type of individuals mostly avoid content that is mild and dull. High sensation seekers prefer to spend more time in watching movies full of humor (Schierman & Rowland, 1985). High sensation seekers get involved in various types of mobile applications (high in entertainment quotient and not quite regular) in order to get rid of dull and monotonous life.

Experience seeking as one of the trait of sensation seeking focuses on encouragement deduced from a different lifestyle full of contemporary music, art (performing, visual etc.), travel, following dreams and also people make sure that boredom doesn’t disturb them (Deckers & Ruch 1992). Taking funny selfies leads us towards a new dimension of our personality, which can make us ecstatic and decision to post these on social network sites may be considered as bold or adventurous. If the typecast good-looking selfies are known as an inhibition, funny selfies which can liberally demonstrate appearance of an individual can certainly be acknowledged as a disinhibition in Figure 1.



Source: Adapted from Literature

**CONCEPTUAL STUDY MODEL  
FIGURE 1**

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study used sample of students at a private business school in Hyderabad, India. The participants were students from graduate and post-graduate classes. The survey was conducted with the help of structured questionnaire. Participation in the survey was voluntary. A total of 265 students participated in the survey.

### Measurement Scales

**Gratifications-Sought:** A second order construct Gratifications-Sought with three first-order constructs namely; entertainment and relaxation needs, escapism needs, attention-seeking needs was measures with 15-items scale borrowed from (Malik et al., 2016; Lee & Ma, 2012; Baek et al., 2011; Haridakis & Hanson, 2009). These 15 items were measured on 7-point Likert's scale (1 = "strongly disagree" and 7 = "strongly agree").

**Narcissism:** A 12-item Narcissism Personality scale developed by Zhou et al., (2009) was adopted in this study. The second order construct narcissism had three sub constructs namely; authority, superiority, exhibitionism. A seven-point Likert's scale was used (1 = "strongly disagree" and 7 = "strongly agree") to elicit response from the target respondents.

**Sense of Humor.** A second order construct Sense of Humor with two first-order constructs namely; meta-message sensitivity, attitude towards humor, was measures with 6-items scale borrowed from Svebeck (2010). A seven-point Likert's scale was used (1 = "strongly disagree" and 7 = "strongly agree") to record responses.

**Sensation Seeking:** An Eight-item Brief Sensation Seeking Scale (BSSS) developed by Hoyle et al., (2002) was used in this study. A seven-point Likert's scale was used (1 = "strongly disagree" and 7 = "strongly agree") to measure the responses of respondents.

**Intensity of Use.** A five-item scale developed by Chester, (2016) was used to measure intensity of use construct. The responses were measured on 7-point Likert's scale (1 = Never, 7 = very Often).

The sample items included '*I ask for my parents' or friends' assistance to make my humorous selfies more interesting*'; '*I spend much time making my humorous selfies*'; '*I always try every effect/material/decoration in the humorous selfie-making applications*'; '*I frequently share my humorous selfie photos or videos to my social network sites*'; '*I frequently make humorous selfie photos or videos*'.

### Data Analysis and Results

The sample had a good mix of both genders. Whereas, there were more participants from post-graduate classes. Majority of the students mentioned clearly that they spend approximately 50% of their free time on various social networking sites. Though 265 forms were collected on completion of survey from all participants, a total of 228 questionnaires were found complete with all information. The post-graduate group comprised of 53.50% (122 students) and graduate group was made up of 46.50% (106 students) respondents in the total collected sample.

The post-graduate group comprised 57.40% ( $n = 70$ ) males and 42.60% ( $n = 52$ ) females and the graduate group was made up of 42.50% ( $n = 45$ ) males and 57.50% ( $n = 61$ ) females. Average age for the post-graduate students was  $23.4 \pm 2.1$  years and for graduate students was  $19.2 \pm 1.1$  years. With reference to the brand of smartphone, it was seen that 46% ( $n = 56$ ) of the

post-graduate students and 32% (n = 34) of graduate students had an expensive Apple I-Phone. The following Table 1 mentions descriptive statistics of the sample data.

<b>Table 1</b>			
<b>DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS</b>			
<b>Name of Construct</b>	<b>Name of Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Sensation Seeking	SS1	4.66	1.222
	SS2	4.94	1.211
	SS3	4.69	1.163
	SS4	4.89	1.168
	SS5	4.79	1.186
	SS6	4.56	1.256
	SS7	4.63	1.286
	SS8	4.64	1.191
Entertainment and Relaxation Needs	EN1	4.63	1.186
	EN2	4.73	1.047
	EN3	4.83	1.049
	EN4	4.82	1.212
	EN5	4.63	1.144
	EN6	4.86	1.114
Escapism Needs	ES1	4.65	1.213
	ES2	4.58	1.234
	ES3	4.76	1.276
	ES4	4.66	1.292
Attention Seeking Needs	AS1	5.41	1.293
	AS2	5.61	1.271
	AS3	5.57	1.187
	AS4	5.63	1.268
Superiority	SU1	5.15	1.204
	SU2	5.09	1.213
	SU3	5.11	1.247
	SU4	4.93	1.211
Exhibitionism	EX1	4.76	1.237
	EX2	4.72	1.190
	EX3	4.73	1.147
	EX4	4.85	1.149
Meta-Message Sensitivity	MM1	5.17	1.259
	MM2	5.29	1.154
	MM3	5.31	1.185
Attitude Towards Humor	AT1	4.88	1.314
	AT2	5.08	1.328
	AT3	5.11	1.293
Intensity of Use	IO1	5.29	1.257
	IO2	5.40	1.174
	IO3	5.32	1.238
	IO4	5.05	1.313
	IO5	5.32	1.195
Authority	AU1	4.76	1.555
	AU2	5.12	1.389
	AU3	5.27	1.261
	AU4	5.15	1.273

**Source:** Author Compilation

It is evident from the table that mean response in case of sensation seeking varies from 4.56 to 4.94 with standard deviation from 1.163 to 1.286. In case of Entertainment and Relaxation Needs, average range from 4.63 to 4.86 with standard deviation from 1.047 to 1.212. Mean values in case of Escapism Needs were ranged from 4.58 to 4.76 with standard deviation from 1.213 to 1.292, in case of Attention Seeking Needs from 5.41 to 5.63 with standard deviation from 1.187 to 1.293, in case of Superiority from 4.93 to 5.15 with standard deviation from 1.204 to 1.247, in case of Exhibitionism from 4.73 to 4.85 with standard deviation from 1.190 to 1.237, in case of Meta-Message Sensitivity from 5.17 to 5.31 with standard deviation from 1.154 to 1.259, in case of Attitude Towards Humor from 4.88 to 5.11 with standard deviation from 1.293 to 1.328, in case of Intensity of Use from 5.50 to 5.40 with standard deviation from 1.174 to 1.313, in case of Authority from 4.76 to 5.27 with standard deviation from 1.261 to 1.555 in Table 2.

S.N.	Name of Construct	Cronbach's Alpha Value
1	Entertainment and Relaxation Needs (ENR)	0.788
2	Sensation Seeking (SSG)	0.667
3	Escapism Needs (ESC)	0.812
4	Attention Seeking Needs (ASG)	0.812
5	Authority (AUT)	0.782
6	Superiority (SUP)	0.851
7	Exhibitionism (EXH)	0.706
8	Meta-Message Sensitivity (MMS)	0.864
9	Attitude Towards Humor (ATH)	0.848
10	Intensity of Use (IOU)	0.889
Overall		0.923

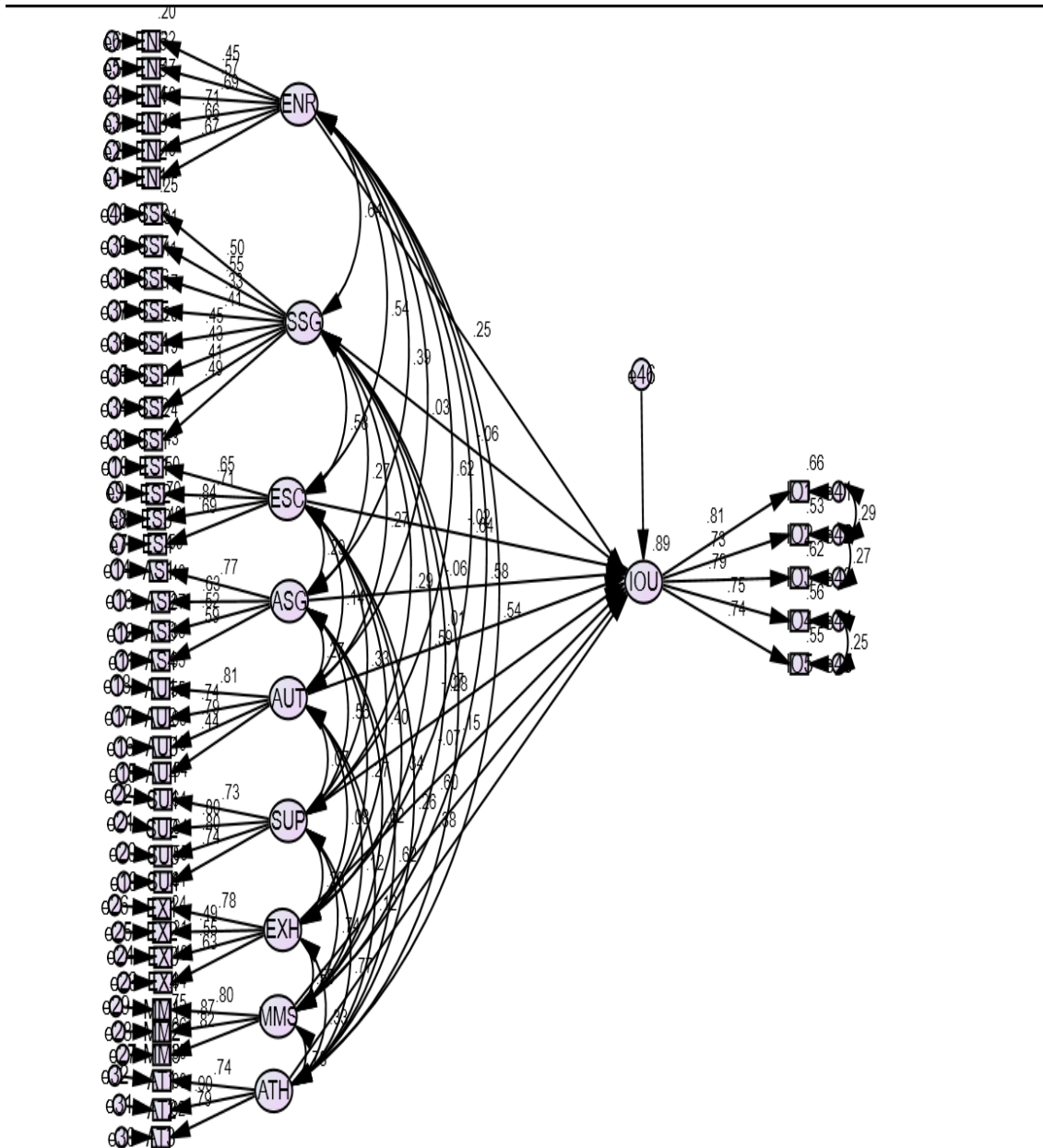
Source: Author Compilation

It is evident from the above table that Cronbach's alpha values in case of individual construct ranges from 0.667 to 0.889 and overall Cronbach's alpha was 0.923. This value of reliability coefficient met the criteria (Cronbach's alpha value > 0.70) suggested by Nunnally & Bernstein, (1994). Hence the measurement scales used in the current study passed the reliability test in Table 3 and Table 4.

S. N.	Goodness of Fit Index	Value	Acceptable Threshold Value
1	CMIN	1265.599	-
2	DF (Degrees of Freedom )	897	-
3	CMIN/DF	1.411	good if < 3
4	IFI (Incremental Fit Index)	0.917	good if $\geq 0.90$
5	CFI (Comparative fit Index)	0.915	Range 0 -1, good if more towards 1
	TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index)	0.906	
6	RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation)	0.043	good if < 0.08
7	P Close	0.990	good if close to or equal to 1
9	ECVI (Expected Cross Validation Index)	Default Model = 6.791 ECVI value for Saturated Model = 9.119 ECVI value for Independence	Default model should have least ECVI value

	Model = 23.815	
Source: Author Compilation		Source: Hair et al., (2010)

It can be concluded from the above table that all goodness-of-fit and badness-of-fit indices are in acceptable range (Hair et al., 2010). Hence the current study model had achieved a good fit in Figure 2.



**FIGURE 2**  
**STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELING RESULTS**



S. N	Relationship	Unstandardized Coefficient	Standardized Coefficient	S. E.	C.R.	p-value	R <sup>2</sup>
1	IOU <--- ATH	0.381	0.381	0.115	3.315	***	0.888
2	IOU <--- MMS	0.637	0.605	0.125	5.080	***	
3	IOU <--- EXH	-0.093	-0.066	0.134	-0.694	0.488	
4	IOU <--- SUP	-0.080	-0.070	0.128	-0.625	0.532	
5	IOU <--- AUT	0.015	0.008	0.102	0.150	0.881	
6	IOU <--- ASG	-0.087	-0.064	0.104	-0.841	0.400	
6	IOU <--- ESC	-0.028	-0.024	0.074	-0.374	0.709	
6	IOU <--- ENR	0.313	0.245	0.152	2.054	0.040	
6	IOU <--- SSG	-0.097	-0.057	0.194	-0.501	0.616	

## DISCUSSION

Different individuals share their funny selfies across social networking sites in order to get attention. This selfie posing behavior also helps them in self-entertaining them and a measure of escape to move away from stress situations. These funny selfies just don't help people to bypass stressful situations or environment, but also highlight them. Funny selfies help people to live a life full of joy and mindfulness. The act of playing with funny selfies leads these individuals to live stress free life. This typical behavior of people expresses the escapism needs, which motivates them to cerebrally evading the reality.

This also underpins the theory of 'Play' proposed by Caillois & Barash (2001), assuming that play pays to grow a sense of being dissimilar and detach from routine life and "mimicry" involves attempts to escape oneself. In order to make funny selfie, an individual may shorten, enlarge, or twist his/her face, hair spikes, irregular size moustache, and illuminating horns etc. these all exercises will only focus on the aspect that your selfies look different from your original selfies. This type of escapism leads to imagine a fantasy world and it leads to get relief from stressful situations during a particular day.

According to the study findings, when the complete causal model was tested by employing first order structural equation modeling with maximum likelihood estimation, only attitude towards humor, meta-message sensitivity (Sense of Humor dimension) and entertainment and relaxation needs (gratification sought dimension) were found significant. Since meta-message sensitivity ( $\beta = 0.637$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ) was found most important predictor of intensity of use (funny selfie), therefore it may be inferred that people despite their stressful lives, they find humor in those stressful situations with the help of these funny selfies.

Attitude towards humor ( $\beta = 0.381$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ) was found second most important predictor of intensity of use (funny selfie). Thus, it appears that there is no requirement of prodigious sense of sensitivity to humor to make funny selfies. It is quite clear because it doesn't require special training or skillset to produce funny selfies. People can access the technology which can provide all preset effects. Hence, these technological features help in reducing barriers to use in funny selfie-making context. This leads to conclude that attitude matters not the ability of people or users.

Entertainment and relaxation needs of people prepare them to participate in funny selfie sharing. Study found empirical evidence of Entertainment and relaxation needs as significant predictor of intensity of use ( $\beta = 0.313$ ,  $p = 0.040$ ). This type of activity will help people to get rid of boredom and lead an enriching life. Hence, one practical implication of the research work

may be to constantly update technical aspects in terms of having full feature rich photo editing applications for everlasting enjoyment for funny selfie lovers.

As highlighted in study objectives, people prefer to propagate their positivity and smartness through good-looking selfies, but still love to share the funny selfies may be related to narcissism. But in the study findings, none of the dimensions (authority, superiority, exhibitionism) of narcissism was significant in explaining intensity to use. But authors like; Sorokowski et al., (2015) and Weiser, (2015) found significant positive correlation among all the dimensions of narcissism and selfie-posting frequency.

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The main aim of this study was to investigate the determinants of sharing funny selfies across online social networking sites. The causal relationships among narcissism, gratifications sought, sense of humor, sensation seeking, and intensity of use were tested by using first order structural equation modeling with maximum likelihood estimation method.

The study findings confirmed meta-message sensitivity, attitude towards humor and entertainment and relaxation needs as significant predictors of intensity of use in funny selfie context. None of the sub-dimensions of narcissism namely; authority, superiority, exhibitionism was found having significant on intensity of use. Further the path mentioning sensation seeking and intensity of use was also insignificant. Rather, one sub-dimension of gratifications-sought namely entertainment and relaxation needs was found as significant predictor of intensity of use. But other sub-dimensions such as; escapism needs, attention-seeking needs didn't yield significant impact on intensity of use. The overall model explained 88.80 percent of variance. By including significant and insignificant path coefficients, the present study extends previous funny selfie literature showing that meta-message sensitivity, attitude towards humor and entertainment and relaxation needs are dominant predictors of funny selfie sharing posting behaviors on various Social Networking Sites (SNSs). Selfie sharing is an activity full of motivation and energy (Weiser, 2015).

It reflects the psychological and social connectedness of people and the findings of the current study contribute to intensity of using funny selfies and also sharing across SNSs. For managers of funny selfie making products, it is required to focus more on meta-message sensitivity, attitude towards humor and entertainment and relaxation needs aspects to have eye-catching selfies. Also, they may think of developing a user community, which facilitates sharing funny selfies, viewing them, add comments, sharing etc. This type of facility will definitely increase continuous interactions and feelings of cohesiveness.

### Limitations and Future Scope of Study

This study is not free from limitations. Due to the non-random (non-probability) sampling method used, the sample of this study can be biased. So the study suffers from methodological limitation. The study result cannot be generalized due to small sample size used to analyze the study variables. In order to get a better understanding about funny selfie sharing behavior, more dimensions of narcissism, gratifications-sought, sensation seeking, attitude towards humor should be considered. A focus group may be conducted to understand the underlying motivations for exhibiting this type of typical behavior and more control variables can be considered to lead a more comprehensive study.

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