

European Journal of
Sociology
(EJS)



FACEBOOK 'SELFICIDE': ARE THEY MODERN-DAY
TRAGIC ATTEMPTS OF OUR SYMBOLIC CAPITAL?

Tasawar Hannan



FACEBOOK ‘SELFICIDE’: ARE THEY MODERN-DAY TRAGIC ATTEMPTS OF OUR SYMBOLIC CAPITAL?

Tasawar Hannan
2355 Thomson way, Wellington, FL-33414, USA
Email: hannan.family.2021@gmail.com

Abstract

Purpose: This article addresses this novel area tied to social networking sites, like Facebook and our Symbolic Capital, claiming that Facebook activities like extreme selfies reflect the participants’ desire for honor or Symbolic Capital thus opening up a new connection between Facebook usage and Symbolic Capital.

Methodology: This research methodology is based on qualitative data analysis from prior research activities, real world evidences, PWM of death incidents regarding extreme selfies, and finally, sociological and philosophical analysis of capitals from Pierre Bourdieu.

Findings: We are proposing a correlation between our desire for Symbolic Capital (collecting honor, trophy, and pride) for taking extreme Facebook selfies, explained by the PWM (Prototype Willingness Model) behavior model.

Keywords: *Symbolic Capital, Social Capital, Social Network, Facebook, PWM*

Introduction

Symbolic Capital refers to resources available to a person for honor, prestige, glory within a culture. Most of our current research was done associated with Facebook and Social Capital - a term coined by Pierre Bourdieu but few (or any) work has been done analyzing the interactions between the users of the social networking site and their urge for collecting ‘Honor’, i.e., ‘Symbolic Capital’, especially their efforts to take extreme selfies that even resulted in their deaths.

Social capital broadly refers to the resources accumulated through the relationships among people. Social capital is an elastic term with an expansion of definitions in multiple fields, conceived of as both a cause and a sway (Resnick, 2001; Williams, 2006). Bourdieu and Wacquant define social capital as “the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition”. The resources from these relationships can differ in form and performance and support the relationships themselves.

Social capital has been linked to an expansion of positive social outcomes - public health, lower crime rates (Buonanno, Montolio, and Vanin, 2009) [12], and more efficient financial markets (David Javakhdze, Stephen P. Ferris, Dan W. French, 2016) [13]. In line with several measures of social capital, this important resource has been declining within the U.S. for the past several years (Putnam, 2000) [14]. When social capital declines, the community experiences increased social disorder, reduced participation in civic activities, and potentially more distrust among community members. Greater social capital increases commitment to a community and so the power to mobilize collective actions, among other benefits. Social capital could also be used for negative purposes, but normally social capital is seen as a positive effect of interaction among participants in social networks (Helliwell & Putnam, 2004)[15].

Symbolic capital which is convertible from every other sort of capital, is central to the work of Pierre Bourdieu. This means if a member of our society holds some other capital, say a musician having a great talent in music or an investor earning huge amount of economic capital from his profits, then they can position themselves higher in the society. They use their economic capital (for that investor) or cultural capital (for that musician) and translate them into ‘honor’ or symbolic capital and help gaining them particular position in their respective community. Although it’s often simply glossed as “honor” or “prestige,” it is important to note that the consideration and prestige inherent in symbolic capital is the outcome of the conversion of different kinds of capital. Bourdieu defines symbolic capital as “the form that the varied species of capital assume after they are perceived and recognized as legitimate” (Bourdieu, 1986)[16] Hence, although apparently conceptually existing in Bourdieu's work alongside the alternative “capitals”—economic, cultural, and social—symbolic capital isn't a novel sort of capital, but rather should be seen as legitimate, recognized sort of converted capitals.

Literature Review

It is important to review some prior works related to Facebook, risk taking behaviors, social capital and PWM. In this literature review we wanted to show that current literatures have shown that 1) Facebook promotes risky or risk-taking behaviors 2) The literature on the theoretical explanation on some risky online behavior using Behavior model like PWM 3) Facebook promotes behavior which encourage ‘willingness’ to accumulate more social capital.

However, the area that is missing is how risk-taking behavior is paired up with the desire for symbolic capital from the perspective of current theories from no.2 above. Various mechanisms of risky behavior and users' efforts to accumulate social capital are already in the process, already going on. In this article we are making an additional claim that some same risk-taking behaviors exist for collecting symbolic capitals from extreme Facebook selfies.

In a study on "Risk of Social Media for Teens in an Urban Setting", authors Megan Knowles, Sara Hirschfeld Lee and MaryAnn O'Riordan, Rina Lazebnik (2014)[23] conducted a written survey for adolescents with the ages between 13 to 21 and analyzed their risky behavior stemmed from their Facebook use. Almost all participants (93%) reported belonging to a social media site. The majority of adolescents (72%) used phone to access the Internet. From the written survey, the researchers found half (49%) of the participants accept friend requests from strangers, 42% send friend requests to strangers, and 55% of participants report meeting people from social media sites in person. The last behaviors across the globe is perceived and observed to be risky. And yet, these behaviors are occurring daily basis all around the globe.

In a study on Risky behavior via social media: The role of reasoned and social reactive pathways", by Branley and Judith (2018)[24] discussed the role of reactive and reasoned behavior on online risk taking behavior. The researches adopted a dual-process framework of the type from the Prototype Willingness Model (PWM: Gerrard et al., 2008 [25]) to predict willingness to participate into four different types of risky online activities: publicly sharing one's current location, sharing embarrassing photos, engaging in and sharing the videos of risky pranks or stunts, and getting engaged in sexual communication/texting with complete strangers. The researchers choose those four risky behaviors to investigate risk taking behavior which mostly represent the behaviors at the core of social media: sharing, (i.e., location sharing, photo sharing) and online communication; and these risk behaviors have previously been linked to social media usage (Brake, 2014).

The reasoned pathway antecedents proposed in models like the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA: Fishbein & Ajzen), Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB: Ajzen) and Fishbein's (2008)[27] integrative model of behavioral prediction (IM) have been widely successful in predicting positive health behaviors. However, they have not been as successfully applied to the prediction of negative or risky behaviors (such as Selficide). It has been suggested that this may be due to the models being focused purely upon a reasoned, intentional pathway to risk. The PWM incorporates two different pathways to behavior: a reasoned pathway to account for risk behaviors that are planned and determined by *intentions*, and a social reactive pathway to account for unplanned or non-intentional variations in people's *willingness* to engage in risk behavior. In this article we would try to establish a correlation between the social-reactive path ways of users' behavior influencing the risk taking behaviors of extreme selfies.

In a study on "The Benefits of Facebook "Friends:" Social Capital and College Students' Use of Online Social Network Sites" by Nicole B Ellison, Charles Steinfield and Chris Lampe (2007) [17], the authors established that Facebook creates and maintains social capital.

Nicole B. Ellison et al, presented some basic descriptive data to characterize Facebook users and provided insight into whether Facebook is employed more to satisfy new people or to take care of

or strengthen relationships with offline connections. In an exceedingly short period of time, Facebook had garnered an awfully strong percentage of users in college campuses. In their sample, 94% of the undergraduate students surveyed were Facebook users. The researchers investigated whether users and non-users differed significantly across various demographic characteristics but lacked confidence in these findings given the extremely low number of non-Facebook users. The rest of their analyses rely only on data from Facebook members.

Facebook members reported spending, on the average, between ten to thirty minutes using Facebook daily, and report having between 150 and 200 friends listed on their profile. They found that respondents also report significantly more Facebook use involving people with whom they share an offline connection—either an existing friend, a classmate, someone living near them, or someone they met socially—than use involving meeting new people.

Further insight into Facebook usage patterns gleaned from the researchers data showed what elements respondents report including in their Facebook profile and who they believe has seen their profiles, respectively. The actual fact that just about all Facebook users include their high school name in their profile (96%) suggested that maintaining connections to former high school classmates could be a strong motivation for using Facebook.

So as to explore their research hypotheses regarding the link between Facebook use and also the varieties of social capital, the researchers conducted regression analyses. In each regression, they controlled for demographic, subjective well-being, and Internet use factors, so as to determine if the usage of Facebook accounted for variance in social capital over and above these other independent variables. To check Hypothesis 1, the researchers first investigated the extent to which demographic factors, psychological well-being measures, and general Internet use predicted the quantity of bridging social capital reported by students. They then entered the Facebook intensity variable, which raised the adjusted R² to .43. a further pair of analyses further explored whether Facebook intensity interacted with the self-esteem and satisfaction with MSU life scales. The key finding was that, after first controlling for demographic factors, psychological well-being measures, and general Internet use, the extent to which students used Facebook intensively still contributed significantly (scaled beta₅ = .34, $p < .0001$), supporting Hypothesis 1. Interestingly, general Internet use wasn't a major predictor of bridging social capital, suggesting that only certain types of uses of the net support the generation and maintenance of bridging social capital.

The researchers definitively established that there's a positive relationship between certain types of Facebook use and also the maintenance and creation of social capital. Although they could not say which precedes between the two, Facebook appears to play a very important role within the process by which students form and maintain social capital, with usage related to all three types of social capital included in their instrument.

Although representation of non-users was low in their sample, after they compared members vs. nonmembers, they found no real difference in demographics, with the exception of high school class year and age (which is strongly correlated with the high school year).

The researchers found that the participants overwhelmingly used Facebook to stay connected with old friends and to take care of or intensify relationships characterized by some type of offline connection like dormitory proximity or a shared class. For many, Facebook provided some way to stay connected with high school friends and acquaintances.

The first dimension of social capital—bridging—assessed the extent to which participants were integrated into the MSU community, their willingness to support the community, and also the extent to which these experiences broadened their social horizons or worldview. Researchers' findings suggested that certain types of Facebook use (articulated by our Facebook intensity items) can help students accumulate and maintain bridging social capital

In a study on “Experimental evidence of massive-scale emotional contagion through social networks”, Kramer, Guillory, and Hancock (2014) found that by manipulating the News Feeds of users, they were able to affect the moods of the users themselves. The information scientists restricted the content shown to over 689,000 users, removing either positive or negative updates from their feeds so as to determine how those actions influenced the content posted by the affected parties.

The study found that the inputs people received, via their News Feeds, did, absolutely, affect their moods. People were outraged when the results were made public, with many criticizing Facebook for actively manipulating the emotional states of their users - users whom they might not possibly know the emotional states of. What if they'd brought down the mood of somebody who was already depressed?

The study showed just how powerful The Social Network had become. Not only is it where 936 million people log-in daily to induce the most recent updates from friends and family, but it has also become main media inputs, influencing how the users perceive, see and act. It's that influence that has Facebook positioned on top of the powerful media players within the world, the keeper of the largest trove of audience data in our history - but it also positions the network in an unprecedented position of influence and one which can be abused.

Does it matter if we all know the background, the why, of why users post certain things on Facebook? It's of interest, of course, many users see positive updates from friends, as a positive relationship status update, and they'll invariably compare their own scenario to the poster, oftentimes negatively. We've all experienced this in how, seeing how well people do and comparing our own situation. This research underlines that Facebook updates don't seem to be necessarily 100% reflective of the truth of a situation. People post so as to induce a reaction - people post about their health regimen so as to induce positive reinforcement, about their relationships because they crave support. While to the plain observer it's going to seem that these people have it all, it is important to contemplate that everybody posts selectively, what you're seeing isn't necessarily all-inclusive documentation of that users' life.

Social Reinforcement and Behavior

A notable study conducted in 1968 [19], researchers checked out school-age children who spent little time studying. The kids were then given praise and a spotlight for study efforts. The researchers found that children studied up to twice the maximum amount when given social reinforcement than they did before after they received no such reinforcement.

In some cases, this attention doesn't even have to come from an external source. Self-reinforcement could be a concept highly associated with social reinforcement that involves giving yourself approval for your own behavior. We frequently answer our own behavior consent or disapproval, judging our actions even as we'd those of another individual.

Researchers have found that social reinforcement can play a significant role in different types of areas, including health. The influence of individuals in our social networks can influence the kind of health choices and decisions that we make. In a 2010 article from *The New York Times*, writer Natasha Singer made the statement : "The amount of social reinforcement you give to people to improve their health habits may be more important than who is encouraging them to do so. In other words, a local community network of friends and neighbors may be more important than a remote celebrity spokesman in stopping the spread of, say, sexually transmitted diseases among teenagers."

Such social reinforcement may also be helpful when trying to realize a health-related goal like becoming more physically fit. Enlisting the assistance of friends and finding people to exercise with, can help inspire people to persevere and achieve their goals.

Facebook ‘Selficide’: Connection between Facebook extreme ‘Selfies’ and the theories of Behavior

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) aims to explain the relationship between attitudes and behaviors (A-B connections) within human action. It is mainly used to predict how individuals will behave based on their prior attitudes and behavioral intentions. The theory of reasoned action suggests that stronger intentions lead to increased effort to perform the behavior, which also increases the chance for the behavior to be performed. The TRA was later revised and expanded by the two theorists to overcome any discrepancies in the A-B relationship with the theory of planned behavior (TPB) and reasoned action approach (RAA).

Theory of Planned Behavior was proposed by Ajzen and Fishbein and forwards that behavior is determined by intentions, attitudes (beliefs about a behavior), and subjective norms (beliefs about others' attitudes toward a behavior). The theory was later expanded to the Theory of Planned Behavior where perceived behavioral control (beliefs about one's ability to perform a behavior) and ‘behavioral intentions’ predict behavior. The construct of subjective norms is worth additional consideration here. The construct of subjective norms is analogous to the injunctive norm component of other social norms theories and is one operationalization of the more general construct of social norms. Subjective norms refer how others, whom we care about, would feel about us engaging in a particular behavior (e.g. “Most people that are important to me think that I should not drink too much alcohol.”). According to the theories of reasoned action(TRA) and planned behavior, if I believe that important people in my life would disapprove if I drink too much alcohol then I should be less likely to intend to over-drink alcohol and subsequently less likely to actually over-drink alcohol. Subjective norms are totally different from other operationalizations of social norms in two ways. They focus exclusively on important others as the reference group and the behavior of relevance is on the perceiver's behavior rather than the behavior in general. Thus, the question is not about the extent to which I think others about whom I care approve or disapprove of drinking too much alcohol but rather the extent to which I think others about whom I care approve or disapprove of MY own over drinking of alcohol For example, parents with moderate or favorable views on legalization of marijuana may be less approving of marijuana use by their teens. While subjective norms and injunctive norms share overlapping features, injunctive norms are framed such that they are inherently consistent with Social Identity

Theory and Social Impact Theory and do not include the stipulations regarding the reference group (important others) or the specification that the behavior in question be the person's own behavior.

Dual-process models, like the PWM, are based on the assumption that there are two types of decision making involved in health behavior. The first type of decision making is analytical and based upon the idea that behavior is planned and intentional. The PWM conceptualizes this as a reasoned action pathway similar to that described in models such as the TRA (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), TPB (Ajzen, 1991) and the IM (Fishbein, 2008).

Reasoned pathway models suggest that if an individual holds positive attitudes towards a behavior, feels that others approve the behavior and/or has peers that engage in the behavior – they will be more likely to engage in that behavior themselves.

The second type of decision making is heuristic based and based upon the idea that risk behavior may not always be volitional but influenced by a more emotional reactive response to a given situation. The PWM conceptualizes this as a social reactive pathway whereby people can be willing to engage in a behavior without necessarily having a plan to engage in that behavior. It suggests that willingness is determined by people's images or prototypes they have about the type of person who engages in that activity (e.g., the 'typical' smoker, drinker, or social media user who does dangerous pranks). If people view the prototypical person in a positive light (prototype favorability), they will be more willing to engage in the behavior, particularly if they perceive themselves to also be similar to that individual (prototype similarity).

The second type of decision-making process on our behavior based on 'willingness' is extremely important to understand the 'Selficide' caused by extreme selfies. Based on the overwhelming deaths incident across world-wide, we claim that those incidents were influenced and driven by users' willingness to participate into such behavior based on the prototype-model that they form about specific person(prank, leader, stunt-man)

The Washington Post reported in January 2016 that "about half" of a minimum of 27 "selfie-related" deaths in 2015 had occurred in India [10]. No official datasets on the number of individuals who died taking selfies in India exist, but reports show from 2014 to August 2016, there were 54 deaths in India while taking selfies [11]. The Indian Ministry of Tourism asked states to spot and barricade 'selfie danger' areas, its first national recognition of selfie deaths. Mumbai Police identified around 16 danger zones after, at least one person drowned attempting to take a selfie to those sites [6]. 'No-selfie zone' s were also established in certain areas of the Kumbh Mela because organizers feared bottlenecks caused by selfie-takers could spark stampedes [10].

Researchers also suggested India possibly had a higher ratio of deaths to incidents than other countries because group selfies were more prevalent in India. And this is very important to know since when you gather as a group to take selfies, the 'subjective norms' becomes dominant with the presence of your 'favorite others' who are at present, with the selfie-taker in a group. So, the force of 'others' perception of me become pressing which in turn, might strengthen my 'willingness' for the behavior. Despite creation of 'No Selfie Zone' the death toll continued in India.

Facebook ‘Selficide’: Connection between Symbolic, Social Capital and Risky Behavior

While no literature exists on users’ desire for Symbolic Capital and their intentions or willingness to take risks for negative outcomes (deaths), there is one notable study on how some risky behavior is connected to user’s social capital. In a study conducted in, “Social capital and risk and protective behaviors: a global health perspective” by authors Kaljee & Chen (2011) [29] discussed how social capital can affect members’ health conditions based on their risky behaviors.

The research discussed how Social capital can be used for ‘pro-social’ and ‘anti-social’ activities. Social capital in forms of trust and reciprocity can be either inclusive or exclusive. This has been evident most often in the field of criminology, where negative social capital can contribute to an individual’s involvement in illegal activities, as well as an individual’s isolation from broader familial, peer, and other social connections. For adolescents, such negative social capital can include getting involved into peer groups where alcohol and/or drug use is routinely performed as part of socialization activities. At another extreme level, homeless youth or those youth who are part of gangs may derive significant social and economic support through alternative bonding networks. The same way Social Capital can be used in positive social or negative social behavior, Symbolic Capital can similarly be used positively or negatively in a society.

In a study at “Symbolic Capital and the State's Unconventional Weapon Against Insurgent Terrorism: Howard Barker's Credentials of a Sympathizer”, by author Cheng (2010) [30] analyzed how British authority established their dominance over the Irish by variation of their language usage on the symbolic capital. Due to the power differentials between insurgent terrorists and the state, the former typically challenge the latter's authority, that is, its legitimacy, rather than its military power. Since terrorists and the state compete for the claim to justice and rightfulness (on their own Symbolic Capital), it is not surprising that many of their fights were carried out through language. At the center of Howard Barker's Credentials of a Sympathizer is the quarrel between the British government and the Irish Republican Army over the status of the IRA captives as "criminals" or "political prisoners." The researcher examined how the IRA’s authority has been hijacked even before the language battle can begin. By mobilizing a range of "symbolic capital" such as upper-class manners and language, and by manipulating the complex meanings and connotations attached to different cultural artifacts, the British negotiator Gildersleeve sets up the British as civilized and refined, in contrast to their "violent and low-bred" adversary.

We claim that major connection between users’ desire for symbolic capital and users’ risky behavior is their ‘willingness’ mentioned at PWM model. Where prior model (TRA) stressed on ‘intentions’ how it influenced behaviors (A-B actions), the later PWM model brought ‘willingness’ into the picture as a social reactive pathway for reinforcing behaviors [24]. This social reactive pathway gets more overlapped norms from both ‘subjective norms’ and ‘injunctive norms’ while in group, amplifying the ‘willingness’ factor in their risky behavior.

While prior works had shown Facebook usage and increased Social Capital- Bonding and Bridging, not much analysis was done on Facebook ‘Selfies’ mechanism and the way it contributes to Symbolic capital. Facebook ‘Selfies’ are ‘traditionally’ correlated to users' narcissistic behavior [31].

Selfies are one area targeted by researchers for narcissism. Selfies generate strong emotions as per Forbes [20]. The cultural phenomenon of the ‘Selfie’ exposes an awfully basic human desire—to feel noticed, appreciated, and recognized. And, although the ‘Selfie’ might not always elicit the foremost appropriate sort of recognition, receiving just some likes from our Facebook or Instagram friends uncovers a foundational aspect of human psychology which will actually help drive leads to the workplace—when people are recognized and feel appreciated, they repeat the behavior that was recognized.

In their notable work, “Is Facebook Linked to Selfishness? Investigating the Relationships among Social Media Use, Empathy, and Narcissism”, authors Alloway, Runac, Qureshi, Kemp (2014)[21] conducted research over 400 individuals and asked them a variety of questions on their Facebook behavior : what percentage hours per day did they spend on Facebook, the number of times they updated their status. Researches also asked participants to rate their profile picture were they physically attractive, cool, glamorous, and trendy.

To assess how narcissistic they were, researchers gave them a regular narcissism questionnaire, where they would have to decide on between statements that best described them. As an example, users would have to make a decision between “I wish to be the middle of attention” or “I opt to blend in with the crowd”.

Just one Facebook behavior accurately predicted narcissism levels: their profile picture ratings. Narcissistic individuals have an exaggerated view of their attractiveness and need to share it with the globe. The profile picture is the most tangible aspect of a user’s online self-presentation, making it a touchstone for narcissists seeking to draw attention to themselves.

The differences between the sexes were fascinating as per that research. While men were more narcissistic in keeping with the test, narcissistic women were more likely to rate their profile pictures as more physically attractive, glamorous, and cool. This might mean that narcissistic women are more likely to use Facebook as a reflecting pool than narcissistic males.

However, it's worth noting that several other Facebook activities weren't linked to narcissism. The amount of friends they'd, even how often they posted photos of themselves weren't associated with narcissistic tendencies. This pattern suggests that while Facebook might be considered to be a tool for narcissists, it's more than just a reflecting tool.

Facebook ‘Selficide’: Can it be due to our desire for modern-day ‘Symbolic Capital’?

We claim in this article supported by the prior research at [21] that more than just narcissism - some fundamental aspect of honor, recognition - but not narcissism, involved in most of the intense Facebook activities, like extreme ‘Selfies’ that resulted in deaths. We call it ‘Selficide’ which falls under the category of symbolic capital. Our claim for such desire is attributed to the ‘willingness’ of the PWM model that we borrowed from various research actives in the field of on-line social behavior and psychology.

In the Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu [22], the word capital means something like money which is both a medium of exchange and a store that is valuable. It also means power, in two senses: the power to exert influence on one or more people; and something like power as a source of energy. Second, Bourdieu uses the term “symbolic power”. This concept is imbued with the Marxism Bourdieu absorbed as a student, which is centered around materialism. Bourdieu thinks that human

society has both materialist and symbolic dimensions. Religion is an example of a symbolic dimension. It is a human-made structure that allows people to understand a part of their world. Other symbolic systems mentioned by Swartz are language, art, myth, and science.

Bourdieu claims that symbolic systems simultaneously perform three functions: cognition, communication, and social differentiation. First, they supply a structure for understanding the world around us. Second, they form communal understandings that enable people to speak with one another. Third, they act as instruments of domination by providing a structure that categorizes humans and organizes those categories into hierarchies of social value.

The third aspect of Symbolic power and Symbolic capital is incredibly important since it addresses social differentiation. Within the recent proliferation of online activists or bloggers, we are noticing a replacement class of users has emerged in our modern-day time who have the utmost influence over the mass population. The claim in this paper is that such users have higher symbolic power and symbolic capital that has earned them social network users or followers and it started from the voluminous 'Likes' they gather daily on topics like political activity, fundraising, or the other varieties of social reforms.

Now we are able to argue that those Facebook followers/users have helped increase the social capital of the blogger (or online activists). But the reality is, higher 'social position' is more shifted to the activists than towards the followers. The activists have less interest in making individual connections, creating new Facebook connections to extend their social capital. But their goals were to induce more users, more honor or trophies in getting likes against their post, to induce more symbolic capital.

Some real-world observations of Facebook 'Selficide' tied to symbolic capital

Symbolic capital is cited for the case when a 'Hero' sacrifices his/her life for a completely unique cause they deem worthy. People sacrificing their lives for freedom, in fighting wars, in dying for protests in everyday streets- are illustrations of their pursuit for symbolic capital - a dimension that even his earlier generations sociologists could not identify.

There are evidences of significant injuries and deaths during which one or more subjects of a selfie were killed or injured, either before, during, or after having taken a photograph of themselves, with the accident partially attributed to the taking of the photo.

The USA Department of Transportation estimated that in 2014, the so-called "year of the selfie"[6][7], 33,000 people were injured while driving and employing a cell-phone in some fashion, which might include talking, listening, and "manual button/control actuation" including taking, uploading, downloading, editing, or opening of selfies [8]. A 2015 survey by Erie Insurance Group found that 4% of all drivers admitted to taking selfies while driving. [9]

The Washington Post reported in January 2016 that "about half" of 27 "selfie-related" deaths in 2015 had occurred in India [10]. No official datasets on the number of individuals who died taking selfies in India exist, but reports show from 2014 to August 2016, there were 54 deaths in India while taking selfies [11]. The Indian Ministry of Tourism asked states to spot and barricade 'selfie danger' areas, its first national recognition of selfie deaths. Mumbai Police identified around 16

danger zones after, at least one person drowned attempting to take a selfie to those sites [6]. No-selfie zones were also established in certain areas of the Kumbh Mela because organizers feared bottlenecks caused by selfie-takers could spark stampedes [10].

A 2018 study showed that between October 2011 and November 2017, there were 259 selfie deaths in 137 incidents reported globally, with the highest occurrences in India, followed by Russia, United States, and Pakistan [12]. Above observations have revealed selfies are coming with a price tag — the value of having 250 deaths!

The study published by the Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care investigated what percentage people of social media addicts are dying to feed our Instagram [8]. The mean age was 22.94 years. About 72.5% of the total deaths occurred in males and 27.5% in females. The highest number of incidents and selfie-deaths has been reported in India followed by Russia, United States, and Pakistan. Drowning, transport, and falling from the topmost reasons for deaths caused by selfies. We also classified reasons for deaths because of selfie as risky behavior or non-risky behavior. Risky behavior caused more deaths related to extreme selfies than non-risky behavior. The amount of deaths in females is smaller for risky behavior than non-risky behavior while it's approximately thrice in males.

Between 2011 and 2017, Bansal analyzed news stories and located a grand total of 259 people who had died worldwide as a result of selfie-related accidents — something Bansal cleverly named “Selficide”. Hence, we borrowed this term from him in our article! The increase of the “extreme selfie” phenomenon involves photographing yourself “in the foremost extreme environments. That apparently includes river rafting, parachuting, or posing ahead of oncoming trains.

The study spotted just five ‘Selficide’ reported between 2011 and 2013, but as social media grew and almost everyone owns a smartphone with a front camera, in 2017, 93 deaths were caused by selfies.

In keeping with the study, there are eight main causes of death by selfies. The foremost common selfie-killing scenario, that has claimed 70 lives in six years, is drowning — either falling into an oversized body of water or being dragged by waves. Other deaths included posing on the sting of a cliff and falling, accidentally shooting oneself when posing with a firearm, and attacks by animals.

With most of the deaths, one observation is crucial: The death from riskier behavior (Risk-taking Selfies) is thrice higher in males than the non-risk-based selfies. Also, the death for risky behavior by females is over their non-risky behavior. This risk is related to a ‘perception’ of ‘honor’ that the participants strive for and their ‘willingness’ at avail it, not necessarily their reasoning as mentioned in TRA or TPB. Even despite creating ‘no selfie’ zones, death still occurred – ‘reason’ failed while ‘situational willingness’ won!

Conclusions

While many studies were conducted within the area of Facebook and social capital, almost no study has been conducted on Facebook and symbolic capital or any connection with Symbolic Capital and Behavior Theory like PWM, TPM or TAR. While capital conversion from economic to social, or from social to economic, or from economic to symbolic - could be a more common norm, less visibility of our pursuit for Symbolic Capital has been studied in our modern online/social lives. Prior research on Facebook and social capital did not address the worth and

consequences of symbolic capital. While every day in social media world the positive aspect of symbolic capital is observed – in uploading happy pictures, in gaining positive reinforcements via Facebook ‘Likes’ (which help nourish members’ psychological world and wellbeing), but higher prices sometimes the participants are paying while trying to attempt extreme selfies and facing deaths.

Recommendations

To address this constant desire for symbolic capital in our lives and to reduce the chance on selfie-taking activities, along with current ‘No Selfie Zone’, we recommend social networking sites like Facebook and Instagram support-teams to use AI and Machine Learning tools to block or ban selfies which are taken at riskier locations and permit selfies only at safer locations. This way, those life-risking selfies won’t be promoted to social networking site like Facebook. We also recommend the ‘No Selfie Zone’ to be constantly monitored, watched under digital surveillance alerting police/administrative authorities ahead of time. In this way, we hope we can minimize the number of ‘Selficide’ and help reduce their ‘willingness’ to execute such selfies.

References

- [1] Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- [2] Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94 (Supplement), S95–S120. <https://doi.org/10.1086/228943>
- [3] Resnick, P. (2001). Beyond bowling together: Sociotechnical capital. *Boston, MA: Addison-Wesley*.
https://people.eng.unimelb.edu.au/vkostakos/courses/socialweb10F/reading_material/11/Resnick02.pdf
- [4] Williams, D. (2006). On and off the ‘net: Scales for social capital in an online era. *Journal of computer-Mediated Communication*, 593–628,
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2006.00029.x>
- [5] Ng, Naomi (2015). *Twitter declares 2014 year of the selfie*.
<https://ngnaomi.wordpress.com/2015/02/23/twitter-declares-2014-year-of-the-selfie/>
- [6] Anonymous (2016): *The year of the selfie*. www.google.ie. Retrieved 2016-08-25.
- [7] Distracted Driving 2014. *Traffic Safety Facts Research Notes. DOT HS 812 260*
<https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812260#:~:text=DOT%20HS%20812%20260%20Summary%20of%20Statistical%20Findings,well%20as%20nonoccupants%20such%20as%20pedes-trians%20and%20bicyclists.>
- [8] Ashley Halsey III (2015, March 30). Flossing, selfies, romantic encounters: Driving distractions, by the numbers. *Washington Post*.
https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/trafficandcommuting/romantic-encounters-behind-the-wheel-are-a-driving-distraction/2015/03/30/f76c8baa-d3f1-11e4-8fce-3941fc548f1c_story.html
- [9] Gowen, Annie (2016, January 14). More people died taking selfies in India last year than anywhere else in the world. *The Washington Post*.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/01/14/more-people-die-taking-selfies-in-india-than-anywhere-else-in-the-world/>

- [10] Anonymous (2016, August 10) : Freeze frame: States asked to spot 'selfie danger' areas. *Hindustan Times*.
<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/now-no-selfies-allowed-in-front-of-national-memorials-from-august-12-18/story-8BrHFgmxKpvnOUzdsT6U1N.html#:~:text=Freeze%20frame%3A%20States%20asked%20to%20spot%20%E2%80%98selfie%20danger%E2%80%99,the%20country%20in%20the%20past%20couple%20of%20years.>
- [11] Bansal, Agam; et al (2018). Selfies: A boon or bane? *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care*. 7 (4): 828–831. DOI:10.4103/jfmpe.jfmpe_109_18. PMC 6131996. PMID 30234062.
- [12] Paolo, B., Daniel, M. and Paolo, V. (2009): Does Social Capital Reduce Crime? *The Journal of Law and Economics* 52, no. 1, 145-170.<https://doi.org/10.1086/595698>
- [13] David Javakhdze, Stephen P., Dan W. F (2016): Social capital, investments, and external financing. *Journal of Corporate Finance, Volume 37*, 38-55.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcorpfin.2015.12.001>
- [14] Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling Alone*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- [15] Helliwell, J. F., & Putnam, R. D. (2004). The social context of well-being. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*,359(1449), 1435–1446.
- [16] Bourdieu, P. (1986) The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education (New York, Greenwood)*, 241-258.
- [17] Ellison, N.B., Steinfeld, C. and Lampe, C. (2007), The Benefits of Facebook “Friends:” Social Capital and College Students’ Use of Online Social Network Sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 12: 1143-1168. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00367.x
- [18] Donath, J., & Boyd, d. (2004). Public displays of connection. *BT Technology Journal*,22(4), 71.
- [19] Walker, H.M. and Buckley, N.K. (1968), THE USE OF POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT IN CONDITIONING ATTENDING BEHAVIOR1. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 1: 245-250. doi:10.1901/jaba.1968.1-245
- [20] David, S., Todd, N.: The 'Selfie': Mental Disorder Or Insight To Getting Better Results? *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidsturt/2014/04/29/the-selfie-mental-disorder-or-insight-to-getting-better-results/#4b2ef0a46cc2>”
- [21] Tracy, A., Rachel, R., Mueez, Q., George, K. (2014): Is Facebook Linked to Selfishness? Investigating the Relationships among Social Media Use, Empathy, and Narcissism, *Social Networking*, 2014, 3, 150-158. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/sn.2014.33020>
- [22] Bourdieu, P. (1998): *Culture and Power: THE SOCIOLOGY OF PIERRE BOURDIEU*, ISBN: 9780226785950
- [23] Knowles, M., Lee, S. H., O’Riordan, M., & Lazebnik, R. (2014). Risk of Social Media for Teens in an Urban Setting. *Global Pediatric Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2333794X14561656>
- [24] Branley-Bell, Dawn & Covey, Judith. (2017). Risky Behavior Via Social Media: The Role of Reasoned and Social Reactive Pathways. *Computers in Human Behavior*. 78. 10.1016/j.chb.2017.09.036.

- [25] Gerrard et al., 2008 M. Gerrard, F.X. Gibbons, A.E. Houlihan, M.L. Stock, E.A. Pomery: A dual-process approach to health risk decision making: The prototype willingness model, *Developmental Review*, 28 (2008), pp. 29-61. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dr.2007.10.001>
- [26] Brake, David R. (2014). Sharing Our Lives Online: Risks and Exposure in Social Media. 10.1057/9781137312716.
- [27] Fishbein, 2008: A reasoned action approach to health promotion *Medical Decision Making*, 28 (6) (2008), pp. 834-844, 10.1177/0272989X08326092
- [28] Adam D. I. Kramer, Jamie E. Guillory, and Jeffrey T. Hancock (2014): Experimental evidence of massive-scale emotional contagion through social networks, *PNAS*, 2014 111 (24) 8788-8790; <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1320040111>
- [29] Kaljee, L. M., & Chen, X. (2011). Social capital and risk and protective behaviors: a global health perspective. *Adolescent health, medicine and therapeutics*, 2011(2), 113–122. <https://doi.org/10.2147/AHMT.S26560>
- [30] Cheng, S. (2010). Symbolic Capital and the State's Unconventional Weapon Against Insurgent Terrorism: Howard Barker's Credentials of a Sympathizer. *Law and Literature*, 22(2), 269-287. doi:10.1525/lal.2010.22.2.269
- [31] Fox, J., & Rooney, M. C. (2015). The Dark Triad and trait self-objectification as predictors of men's use and self-presentation behaviors on social networking sites. *Personality & Individual Differences*, 76, 161-165. doi: 10.1016/j.paid.2014.12.017