

Death by Selfie in India

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“Selfie” word of the year 2013:

“Selfies” are the self-taken photographs which is used commonly as a self-presentation strategy in social media worldwide [1]. Selfie is defined as a photograph that a person takes of himself (or group) with a smartphone camera possibly for the resolution of posting it in social media. ¹ According to the available demographic data, globally about 1 million selfies are photographed per day by the people belonging to 18- to 24-year age groups[2].

Selfie-related deaths:

Selfie-related death is defined as the death due to dying in the act of photographing themselves. Selfie deaths have turned out to be an emerging pandemic across the globe. To gain attention on social media websites, some individuals portray themselves amongst dangerous settings that results in fatal penalties[2]. There has been an exponential increase in the number of selfie deaths from 2014–2015 to 2016–2017. This is because of increased usage of mobile phones, enhanced selfie features on mobile phones, increased availability of selfie sticks, and also promotion of the phenomenon of selfies through events like “best selfie prize.”

India: The ‘selfie death’ capital.

With greater than 1.3 billion population and 800 million cell phones, India clutches the record for highest number of selfie related deaths. So far 159 selfie related deaths are reported in India, which is more than half of the total selfie related deaths worldwide. This proves the nation's fatal love of group photos by its less aware youthful population[3].

Causes of selfie deaths:

The three most common motives for selfie related deaths are Drowning, transport, and fall form the topmost.[3,4]

“No selfie” zones:

Due to the treacherous inclination of selfie deaths, the experts have endorsed “no-selfie-zones” in India to stop this catastrophic digital manifestation.[4]

The situation has become so calamitous that “no selfie” zones are set up in India [3] Indian cities like Mumbai and Goa have recognized, announced 16 and 24 “no-selfie-zones” in various tourist spots respectively.

This measure includes placement of volunteers and police personnel in the unsafe spots, fortifying the risky spots, and usage of public address system to announce the tourists about the impending danger. Social media sites are also used to spread awareness among the public.[4].

App for Prevention:

Scientists are working on developing a warning system. It is a smartphone application which is based on usage of location service. This app will identify when someone is taking a selfie at risky / unsafe location and alert him/ her about the probable risk to life [5].

Safe Selfie Awareness:

Selfies are not harmful by themselves, but the human behaviour that conveys selfies is hazardous.[2]. Warning signs and No selfie zones must be displayed for public in all risky and dangerous tourist spots. Whatever is said and done, ultimately it is one’s own awareness that can help prevent such fatalities. School and college students must be educated about the potential harm due to high risk selfie-behaviour in dangerous places. Self-awareness among the public is the key solution for this digital menace.

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