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A selfie a day keeps sadness away if...

...you don't overstep limits and know that your images are out in public domain forever

Mary Paulose

DUBAI — Earlier this month, UK-based Sara Cutting was in the news when she claimed that 'a selfie a day keeps sadness away'. A cancer patient undergoing chemotherapy, who's lost hair in the process, Sara has taken to taking selfies — donning different hats in every shot — to give herself and other cancer patients something to smile about.

Sara's is a case of selfies providing her with positive self-affirmation. Hats off.

But, increasingly, this trend is bucking all safety norms and proving to be quite the anti-thesis of good living, with selfie deaths and cases of Body Dysmorphic Disorder (when people compulsively search for "perfect angles" because they think their appearances are flawed) on the rise.

Yet another issue has reared its head of late. "More and more employers are going online to check out the social media profiles of their applicants," says Dr Saliha Afridi, clinical psychologist and director of The Lighthouse Community Psychology Clinic in Dubai.

"Nothing is private — make sure that whatever you post, you would be comfortable sharing that same picture on

the front page of tomorrow's newspaper!"

Many people do not realise the extent of the Internet's reach. "These pictures may not seem like a big deal at the time, but as you grow up, apply for jobs, and have a family, these pictures will be available for people to see and, unfortunately, judge you," states Dr Thoraiya Kanafani, clinical psychologist at the Human Relations Institute & Clinics, Dubai.

"Furthermore, there are many dangerous people on the Internet who have access to social media and use

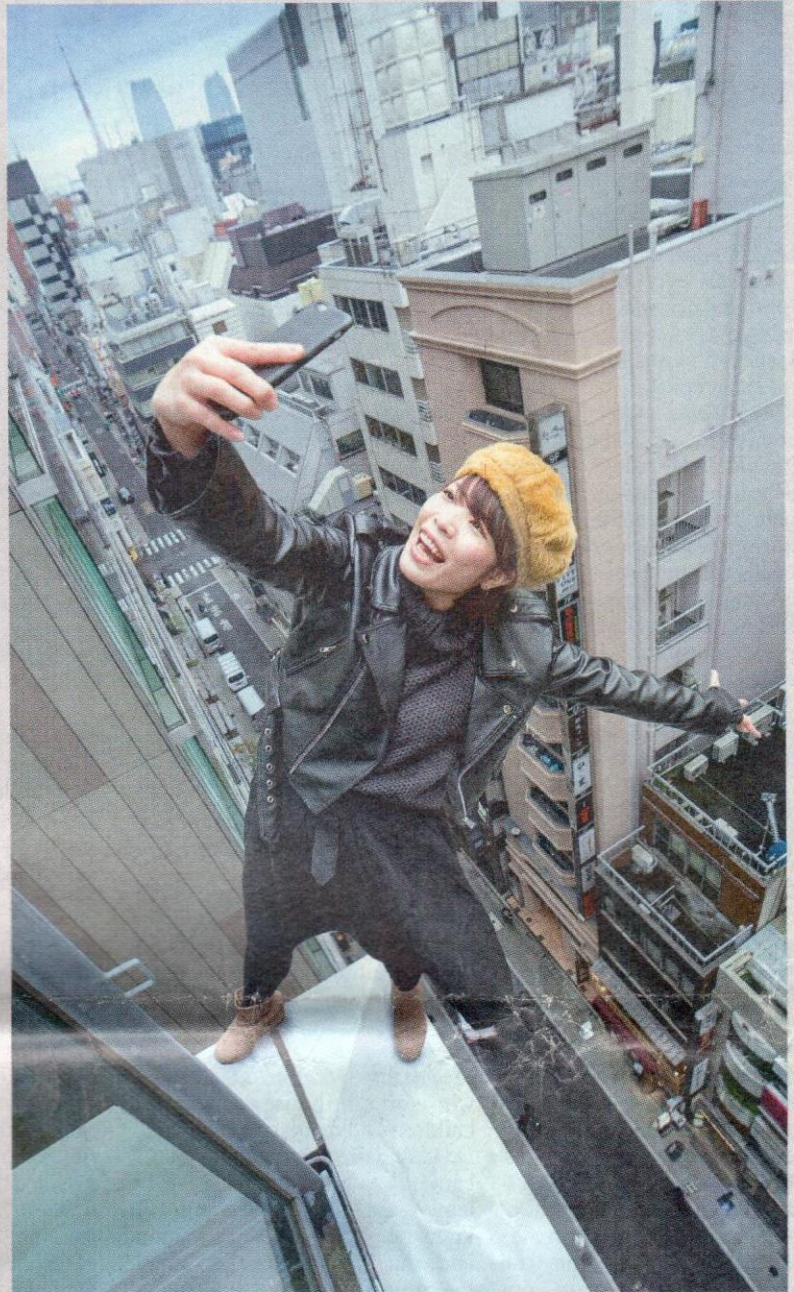
these networks to harass and hurt adolescents and teenagers."

In the UAE, the Burj Khalifa has officially made it to third place in the world rankings of top selfie sites — right behind Eiffel Tower and Disney World, Florida — and a

few daredevil photographers, putting life and limb at risk, have even taken "the highest selfies in the world" on top of the iconic building.

"As a nation, our use of social media is high... I think the consensus is that the person who posts a lot of selfies is self-absorbed; they need their ego stroked and also need validation and approval," feels Dr Saliha.

Not every person who takes a selfie is narcissistic



Many selfie-graphers put life and limb at risk.— Getty file

➤ TURN TO PAGE 3

Read 'The Selfie Obsession' in today's edition of Khaleej Times

selfie a day can keep sadness away ... if used with care

FROM PAGE 1

essed with themselves. "there is a trend of taking multiple photos to gain attention and recognition from others, which has been found to be linked with many mental health issues," Dr Thoraiya. On the road, a selfie can be a lethal trigger for accidents, even deaths. Since the start of last year, both the Dubai and Sharjah Police have cracked down on trigger-happy

drivers who take selfies while behind the wheel. Colonel Saif Mohair Al Mazroui, Director of the Dubai Police's General Department of Traffic, says taking selfies while driving comes under the clause of "endangering lives" on the road.

"People caught taking selfies will be fined Dh500, get two black points and have their car confiscated for one month.

"The police often notice distracted drivers doing these things and their car swerving from side to side or changing lanes involun-

tarily," he adds.

Ashish Panjabi, COO of Jacky's Electronics, talks about selfie sticks — the selfie's 'brand extension'.

"These monopods are a big hit at our consumer electronics shows, but as with anything else, taking selfies and using selfie-sticks boil down to common sense. It's okay to use it at a tourist site, but it can be intrusive in a more private setting, like while dining at a fancy restaurant."

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Selfies while driving

In August last year, the Sharjah Police brought out a report in its magazine *Al Shirti*, published by the police general command. The report was titled 'That moment to take a picture may cost you your life ... selfies, a noteworthy danger', and it looked into the dangers of distracted driving.

Last year, Saudi Arabia slapped fines ranging from SR150 to SR300 on motorists if caught photographing themselves while driving. At the seventh International Youth Conference in Bahrain this week, one of the focal points was how people misuse social media by sharing selfies while driving.



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