

Binge-watching as a behavioural addiction: A systematic review of causes, consequences, and potential for mental health intervention

Deepak Joseph¹, Subi K Varghese²

¹Assistant Professor & HOD, ²Assistant Professor

Department of Social Work, St Berchmans College (Autonomous), Kottayam, Kerala, India

ABSTRACT

Background: Once considered harmless entertainment, binge-watching has gained attention for its potential addictive nature and adverse effects on physical and mental health. In some cases, it is also explored as a mental health intervention. A systematic review of existing literature would provide mental health professionals with a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. **Objective:** This systematic review aims to synthesize research on binge-watching as a behavioural addiction, identify its causes and consequences, and evaluate its potential as an intervention strategy for addressing mental health issues. **Methods:** A comprehensive search was conducted in PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, Embase, Cochrane Library, ProQuest, and Semantic Scholar following PRISMA guidelines. Of the empirical studies published between 2022 to 2024, 20 met the inclusion criteria. **Results:** Evidence suggests that binge-watching can develop into a behavioural addiction characterized by withdrawal symptoms, compulsive viewing, and mood regulation. Key contributing factors include escapism, social anxiety, and emotional loneliness. Negative consequences include academic difficulties, sleep disturbances, and mental health concerns, while positive effects include socialization and emotional support. Although binge-watching may increase social isolation, it also holds potential as a short-term intervention for loneliness. **Conclusion:** Binge-watching presents a complex duality as both a coping mechanism and a potential behavioural addiction. While it offers certain psychological benefits, its risks necessitate targeted interventions, such as educational programs promoting balanced media consumption. Understanding this dual nature is essential for mitigating its impact on individual well-being and media habits.

Keywords: Binge-watching, behavioural addiction, influencing factors, consequences, intervention

INTRODUCTION

The media consumption landscape has radically transformed in the last two decades. Watching television is one of the most traditional and sedentary leisure activities among adults. With technological advancements like the internet, people spending time in front of television has declined drastically. Viewers shifted their focus from traditional media towards online streaming platforms. This new shift paved the way for the emergence of the phenomenon of binge-watching.^[1,2] Binge Watching commonly refers to the practice of watching multiple episodes in one sitting for several hours. Binge-watching, which involves watching movies or streaming content online, is a relatively recent


practice.^[3] More than just the result of technological advancement, binge-watching is a reflection of a societal shift in how people interact with media. The emergence of services like Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Hulu has created new entertainment opportunities, allowing consumers to watch entire seasons of shows on demand at their convenience.^[4] Binge-watching is generally viewed as a harmless activity. Even though binge-watching is used as a mechanism for escape from the stresses of life, it hurts the viewers.

Binge-watching behaviour has become increasingly prevalent, with a variety of literature focusing on its causes and

Address for Correspondence:

Dr. Deepak Joseph
Head of Department of Social Work
St Berchmans College (Autonomous), Kottayam,
Kerala - 686101, India
Email: deepakjosephaimury@gmail.com

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consequences. However, whether binge-watching is a behavioural addiction problem is another controversial topic in the existing literature.^[1] While this compulsive behaviour affects individual well-being, the availability, convenience, and accessibility of streaming services have contributed to their popularity among diverse age groups. Online streaming platforms provide viewers with freedom compared to the limited schedules of traditional entertainment systems, where they can choose which episode to watch according to their preferred timings.^[2]

Despite its widespread acceptability as a normative behaviour in modern society, binge-watching can have serious repercussions on individuals' mental and physical health. Prolonged screen time has been associated with adverse impacts such as sleep issues, sedentary lifestyle, eye strain, and increased risk of anxiety and depression.^[5] Additionally, the compulsive nature of binge-watching bears similarities to other behavioural addictions, such as internet addiction, raising questions about its potential to turn into a severe health condition. Problematic binge-watching tendencies are comparable to drug and other behavioural addictions that impair an individual's ability to function in daily life after they develop an addiction to it.^[2]

The ease of use and availability of streaming services contribute to the continued popularity of binge-watching, notwithstanding these reservations. Examining this behaviour's possible advantages as well as its drawbacks is crucial as it gets increasingly embedded in daily life. According to some research, binge-watching with others can act as a social bonding tool and a stress-reduction strategy.⁶ It is essential to comprehend the entire range of binge-watching's impacts to create well-rounded viewpoints and viable intervention techniques.

Psychiatric social work plays a pivotal role in addressing binge-watching behavioural addiction. By employing holistic assessments psychiatric social workers can identify problems such as escapism, social anxiety, loneliness, and also the consequences of binge-watching. They can contribute to creating educational programmes to enhance media literacy and promote healthy viewing habits. Psychiatric social workers can be involved in

policy-level changes such as implementing screen time guidelines associated with educational institutions. Also, they can implement evidence-based interventions to mitigate the consequences of binge-watching addiction. Integrating all these efforts within mental health care practice can promote individual well-being and advance the field of psychiatric social work, especially in the digital age.

Given the increased popularity of binge-watching and its hazards, there is a need to understand this phenomenon comprehensively. This systematic review attempts to synthesize existing theoretical knowledge on binge-watching as a behavioural addiction, identify the factors that contribute to this behaviour, examine its consequences, and evaluate binge-watching as a potential intervention strategy, as provided in the research papers published between 2022 to 2024.

Objectives

This systematic review sets out to achieve the following objectives:

- To synthesize the existing theoretical knowledge on the concept of binge-watching as a behavioural addiction.
- To identify the factors contributing to the behaviour of binge-watching.
- To understand the short-term and long-term consequences of binge-watching.
- To evaluate binge-watching as a potential intervention strategy

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a systematic review to comprehensively examine binge-watching as a behavioural addiction, its causes, consequences, and potential as a mental health intervention. The review adhered to the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to ensure rigor and transparency in the selection, evaluation, and synthesis of existing research.

Eligibility Criteria

We have included original articles related to binge-watching as a behavioural addiction, factors contributing to the behaviour of binge-watching, consequences of binge-watching,

and binge-watching as an intervention published in the English language between 2022 to 2024 were selected for the systematic review. We have not put any restrictions on age, gender, or other demographic characteristics of the respondents while selecting the articles. We have excluded review articles such as systematic reviews, meta-analyses, scoping reviews, and narrative reviews. We have also excluded articles published in non-English languages and those published before 2022.

Information Sources

We have used PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, Embase, Cochrane Library, ProQuest, and Semantic Scholar for searching the sources. We have also facilitated hand-search reference lists of included studies and relevant review articles to identify the missed eligible studies.

Search Strategy

A keyword-based search strategy was employed across the aforementioned databases. The following keyword combinations were used to identify relevant studies: "binge-watching" AND "behavioural addiction," "binge-watching" AND "influencing factors," "binge-watching" AND "consequences," and "binge-watching" AND ("intervention" OR "coping mechanism").

Selection Process

We screened the titles and abstracts of the retrieved articles independently based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The results of the initial screening have been manually recorded. The full text of the potentially eligible articles was then screened independently for the final selection and later merged to finalize the selection process. Disagreements were resolved through active discussions and consultations.

The electronic database search identified 1376 sources. Further, a total of 198 duplicates were excluded, and 1132 articles that did not meet the inclusion criteria were removed. Thereafter, a total of 46 full-text articles were screened for eligibility. However, after reading, 26 articles were excluded from this systematic review as being irrelevant. Finally, a total of 20 full-text papers met all the criteria set for the review.

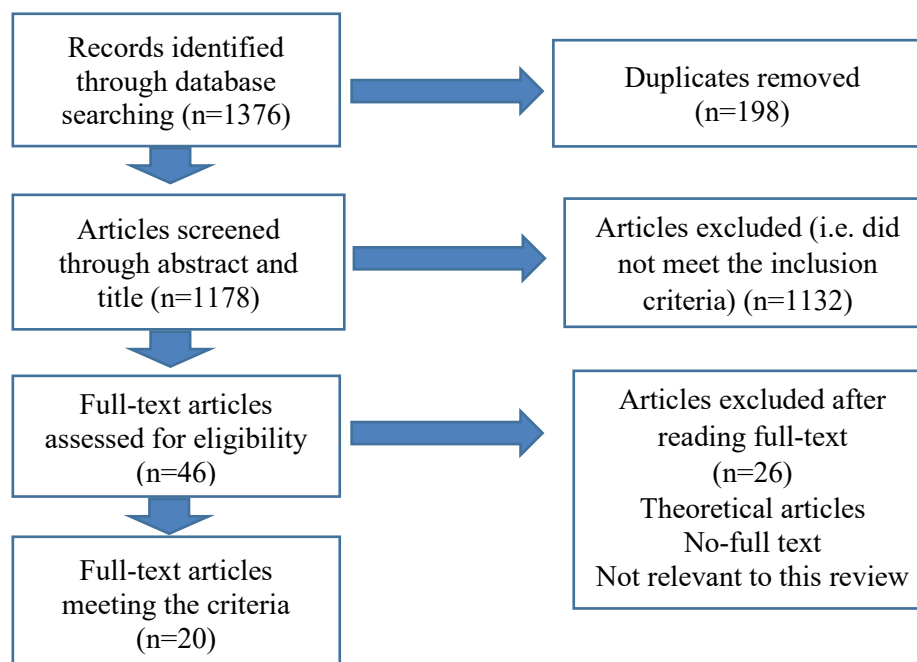
Data Collection

We have independently extracted the data from the selected articles and then merged and synthesized them after active discussions and consultations.

Data Items

We have extracted the following data items from the selected articles: Author and year of publication, title of the article, sample size, objectives, and results.

Figure 1 Flowchart on the search process for the studies



Synthesis Methods

We have synthesized the extracted data based on the objectives of the review which have been presented under the headings binge-watching as behavioural addiction, factors influencing binge-watching, consequences of binge-watching, and binge-watching as an intervention.

RESULTS

Characteristics of the studies included in the systematic review on the binge-watching

The studies included in this systematic review were developed between 2022 and 2024. A total of 456,961 participants took part in the research covered by this systematic review. The majority of the research subjects in all of the studies covered by this systematic review were students. The articles in this review included participants with an age range of 18 years and above. Both qualitative and quantitative studies were included in the review.

Table 1 Studies covered by the systematic review

| Author and year of publication | title of the article | Sample Size | Objective | Results |
|--|--|-------------|--|---|
| Forte et al. 2023 ^[10] | To binge watch tv series: how a leisure activity may affect sleep, mood & QOL | 482 | To identify BW (Binge-Watching) related to quality of life, focusing on sleep quality | Quality of life is directly affected by BW. |
| Shaikh et al. 2024 ^[9] | Binge-watching & beyond: navigating the educational landscape of Netflix | 72 | Investigates the effects of binge-watching web series on students | The outcomes underscore the substantial impact of BW addiction on students' academic pursuits, relationships, and daily routines. |
| Subramanian & Das 2024 ^[8] | Binge watching and mental health among late adolescence and early adulthood | 100 | Investigates the potential impact of binge-watching on the mental health of late adolescents and early adults | Binge-watching may be a risk factor for mental health issues |
| Yen-Jung & Ching-Yi 2022 ^[11] | Exploring experiences of BW & perceived addictiveness among binge-watchers: A qualitative study | 25 | Explore experiences and perceptions of binge-watching behaviour | Results indicate positive attitudes toward binge-watching. The addictiveness of binge-watching remains controversial. |
| Favieri et al. 2023 ^[12] | I feel addicted to watching tv series: association between binge-watching and mental health | 482 | Analyse the mental health (depression, trait anxiety, social anxiety, impulsivity, alexithymia) of people involved in different expressions of BW. | An association between problematic BW and worse mental health conditions was evidenced, and a positive effect of non-problematic BW was supported |
| Alfonsi et al. 2023 ^[15] | 'This is the last episode': the association between problematic binge-watching and loneliness, emotion regulation, and sleep-related factors in poor sleepers | 528 | Identifying sociodemographic, psychological, and sleep-related determinants of problematic binge-watching in poor sleepers | Findings indicate that emotional dysregulation, feelings of loneliness, & daytime sleepiness play a key role in determining problematic binge-watching in poor sleepers, possibly due to the existence of a pathological vicious circle between these factors in poor sleepers. |
| Wingralek et al. 2024 ^[16] | Turn on the screen, and turn off the loneliness analysis of risk factors for binge-watching among Polish medical & non-medical students. A web-based cross-sectional study | 726 | The study aimed to determine the risk factors for binge-watching (BW) among polish medical and nonmedical students. | Students are in a high-risk group for behavioural addiction known as binge-watching. Emotional loneliness, the desire to escape from everyday life problems, and reduced psychological well-being intensified binge-watching in all the studied groups. |

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| Yu & Alizadeh 2024 ^[14] | Online binge-watching among Chinese college students: implications for loneliness, anxiety, and depression | 446 | This study aimed to investigate binge-watching behaviour and addiction among Chinese college students and assess its consequences for mental health, with a particular focus on feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and depression. | Significant link between binge-watching addiction and mental health, with positive associations observed between binge-watching addiction and increased feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and depression. |
| Fa'im Rosli & Mohd Mahudin 2024 ^[17] | One more episode won't hurt! How stress, social interaction anxiety, and loneliness relate to binge-watching behaviours among university students | 149 | Examining whether binge-watching is associated with and predicted by stress, social interaction anxiety, and loneliness. | Binge-watching is significantly correlated with social interaction anxiety and loneliness but not with perceived stress. |
| Jie Chan et al. 2022 ^[19] | Predictions of Netflix binge-watching behaviour among university students during movement control order | 150 | Aims to examine the motives that influence Netflix binge-watching behaviour among university students. | The findings indicated that 'entertainment' has a positive and strong relationship with Netflix binge-watching behaviour, while 'social interaction' and 'escape' motives have a positive but moderately significant relationship with the binge-watching behaviour |
| Asiyah and Ramadhani 2023 ^[21] | Sleep quality among college students: the role of binge-watching and stress | 355 | The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of binge-watching and stress on student sleep quality. | The results of this study indicate that the more often students engage in binge-watching behaviour and feel stressed, the worse the individual sleep quality will be. |
| Sachdeva and Proyesh 2022 ^[22] | Impact of binge watching on mindfulness among young adults during outbreak of pandemic | 130 | The objective of the research was to examine the association between binge watching behaviour and mindfulness among young adults during the phase of pandemic. | The results indicated no significant relationship between binge-watching behaviour and mindfulness and similar findings were reported about the dimensions of binge-watching behaviour with mindfulness. |
| Kofi Brako & Oduro-Appiah 2022 ^[23] | Effects of binge-watching of Netflix on students: a study of department of theatre and film studies, university of cape coast, Ghana | 7 | Explored the effects of binge-watching Netflix on students at the department of theatre and film studies, university of cape coast, Ghana. | Findings indicated that most students gained some knowledge and others had sleeping disorders from binge-watching Netflix. |
| Flayelle et al. 2022 ^[27] | Identifying the psychological processes delineating non-harmful from problematic binge-watching: a machine learning analytical approach | 4275 | This exploratory study aimed to investigate the distinct psychological predictors of non-harmful and problematic watching patterns. | Findings indicate that non-harmful involvement is characterized by positive reinforcement triggered by TV series watching, while problematic involvement is linked to negative reinforcement motives and impulsivity traits. |
| Bastos et al. 2024 ^[24] | Binge-watching uncovered: examining the interplay of perceived usefulness, habit, and regret in continuous viewing | 225 | Examining the roles of habit, continuous intention, and feelings of regret in predicting engagement in this increasingly prevalent form of media consumption. | The results supported the proposed hypotheses and confirmed that regret does not neutralize the positive – and strong – effect of perceived usefulness and habit on binge-watching. |

| | | | | |
|--|---|------|---|--|
| Batik and Demir 2022 ^[25] | The mediating role of binge-watching in the relationship between type d personality and loneliness | 570 | Examine the mediating role of binge-watching in the relationship between type D personality and loneliness. | As a result of the study, binge-watching mediated the relationship between type D personality and loneliness |
| Mento et al. 2024 ^[26] | The role of affective temperaments in binge watching addiction | 1701 | The study aims to learn about the possible role of affective temperaments on motivated behaviour, impulsivity, and decision-making of binge-watching in the general Italian population. | Anxious and cyclothymic temperaments are highly significant. The factors that have a weaker impact on the dependent variables (significance at the 5 % level) are depressive and hyperthymic temperaments on the craving and avoidance dimensions, respectively. |
| Jumrah et al. 2023 ^[13] | The intention of escapism on binge-watching among Penangites | 200 | The purpose of this research is to study the intention of escapism on binge-watching among Penangites | The result of the study indicates that most of the respondents show a positive view of the factor of escapism affecting their desire to binge-watch. |
| Shariffadeen et al. 2023 ^[18] | The mediating role of parasocial interaction in the relationship between loneliness and Netflix binge-watching tendencies: A case study of Malaysian university students during the covid-19 pandemic | 284 | Identify predictors of BWT from the uses and gratification (U&G) perspective | Results indicate that PSI, stress relief, and enjoyment predicted BWT. |
| Asgher & Gohar 2022 ^[20] | Binge-watching on internet television networks & its effects on youth | 500 | The major objectives of this study were to find out the consumption patterns and effects (physical, psychological, and social) of binge-watching on youth | The results discovered that youth were prone to binge-watching, especially at night to avoid disturbance and watch back-to-back episodes without interruption. The needs that motivate the youth to binge-watch include, companionship, stress relief, escape from tension and worries, avoiding negative feelings, and being able to present oneself as updated in peers. |

Binge-Watching as Behavioural Addiction

Behavioural addictions typically involve a pattern of behaviour that is hard to control, persists despite negative consequences, and interferes with daily life. Failure to resist the temptation to perform a particular action, which can be harmful to the person or others is the essential element of behavioural addiction. It is also a recurrent pattern of behaviour. This active, recurrent engagement could lead to disruption in functioning.⁷ Binge-watching can become a behavioural addiction, characterized by an irresistible compulsion to continue with the activity despite its negative consequences. In this regard, those who engaged themselves in

binge-watching behaviour couldn't resist watching, though they were aware of the harmful effects such as loss of sleep, disruption in daily routine and responsibilities, etc. In individuals for whom viewing has become more important than work, studies, or other aspects of life, this loss of control is a very prominent addiction indicator.^[8,10]

There is also the habit of people rearranging their schedules based on binge-watching. Responsibilities get neglected. The compulsive aspect of binge-watching also shows up through disturbance in daily life, especially if this is an activity done late at night, and the sleep patterns become different. This becomes

Psycho-physiologically stressful apart from the actual physical repercussions of disturbed sleep-wake cycles and general health, which most people would not acknowledge.^[9-11]

Furthermore, binge-watching makes a way for mood modification, where individuals experience heightened pleasure and excitement, which makes them continue watching episodes one after the other. This mood enhancement is a key feature of addiction. Tolerance is also evident in binge-watching, especially when people increase their viewing time over time to achieve the same level of satisfaction. The presence of withdrawal symptoms such as boredom and disappointment when one cannot binge-watch and the tendency to deny addictive behaviour when questioned also supports the addictive behaviour. There can be a conflict with family members or significant others who disapprove of their behaviour. Despite these internal or external conflicts, many binge-watchers continue their habits.^[11]

The mental health alterations observed in individuals with problematic binge-watching are strikingly similar to those experienced by people with other addictive behaviours. Specifically, individuals with moderate to problematic binge-watching report higher levels of depression, trait anxiety, social anxiety and avoidance, emotional dysregulation, and impulsivity. These mental health challenges mirror those seen in substance and behavioural addictions, where the inability to control the behaviour leads to significant emotional and psychological distress.^[12]

Factors Influencing Binge-Watching

Binge-watching behaviour is driven by various factors such as psychological and emotional. One significant contributor is decreased psychological well-being, which is often linked to increased feelings of emotional loneliness and a desire to escape from personal problems.¹³ Studies have shown that individuals with lower mental health and a sense of loneliness are more prone to engage in binge-watching as a coping mechanism.^[14-16] This behaviour is often seen as an escape from daily life challenges, which is a temporary relief from psychological distress.

Social interaction anxiety plays a crucial role in perpetuating binge-watching behaviour. For some individuals, binge-watching fulfils affective needs, such as seeking pleasure to regulate negative emotions, or serves as a means to alleviate anxiety related to social interactions.^[17] Students, in particular, use binge-watching as a strategy to connect with others as it is less intimidating in a virtual environment, thus satisfying the need for social inclusion without the fear of being judged by others.

Furthermore, daytime sleepiness increases the tendency to binge-watch to escape from reality or cope with stress^[18] and negative emotions.¹⁵ Streaming platforms like Netflix's release strategy where entire seasons are made available at once, also contribute to the binge-watching phenomenon. University students, often under significant stress, may find binge-watching an appealing way to pass the time and distract themselves from the pressures of assignments and exams. The ability to consume entire seasons in one sitting with friends adds a social dimension to the activity, reinforcing its appeal as a means of escape and relaxation.^[19]

Students who enjoy binge-watching on Netflix are more likely to continue the behaviour. This is because Netflix content is particularly binge-worthy due to its enjoyable nature and can satisfy the need for entertainment. So, enjoyment emerges as a primary motivation for binge-watching, with a preference for content that is more entertaining rather than informative, such as reality shows, dramas, sitcoms, and anime, as opposed to documentaries. The COVID-19 pandemic context may have contributed to increased rates of this behaviour because of reduced options for entertainment. As a means of amusement and escape, people subsequently resorted to binge-watching as a source of comfort to cope with these restrictions. During this period, there was increased focus on enjoyment as an underlying motivator for binge-watching suggesting that in times when one has little choice about what to watch, pleasure becomes extremely attractive.^[18]

In summary, binge-watching behaviour is fueled by a combination of decreased mental health, emotional loneliness, social anxiety, and the desire to escape reality. These factors create a cycle where individuals turn to binge-

watching as a coping mechanism, which may offer temporary relief but ultimately contributes to a deeper entrenchment in addictive viewing patterns

Consequences of Binge-Watching

The consequences of binge-watching reveal an interplay of both negative and positive outcomes affecting mental health, sleep quality, academic performance, emotional well-being, and quality of life.

Sleep Disturbances and Quality of Life

One of the significant negative consequences of binge-watching behaviour is its impact on sleep.²⁰ Research indicates that individuals who are involved in problematic binge-watching experience poor sleep quality and a high prevalence of sleep-related disorders. These impairments are evident in various sleep characteristics, including subjective sleep quality, sleep latency, sleep duration, habitual sleep efficiency, and daytime dysfunctions.¹⁰ There is also a strong correlation between binge-watching frequency and poor sleep quality, which leads to frequent complaints of tiredness and higher incidence of insomnia.²¹

Physical Effects

Individuals have reported physical effects that are associated with binge-watching. Some of the individuals claimed they lost track of time since they were so into the movies, they watched leading to sleep interruptions and difficulties falling asleep. During the day time especially after late-night watching sessions, they reported feeling sleepy and fatigued which made it hard for them to settle down. Sitting for long periods while watching led to back pain while staring at the screen for hours causing eye fatigue, blurred vision, and headache according to many given replies. Also, some individuals reported eyesight was getting worse, especially during nocturnal binge-viewing in darkened rooms with screens so close to their faces. Also, there was an apparent feeling of laziness; people even talked about gaining weight because they ate too much junk food when engaged in binge-watching habits. The excessive viewing of screens due to binge-watching can lead to comparisons that are out of this world. It is usually brought about by tailored pictures in digital media which gives people a feeling of being hip and not satisfied. Their opportunity cost is very high

since every hour spent on the screen means another hour not engaged in other activities such as exercise. This sedentary lifestyle combined with constant eating may result in obesity with consequences like heart disease and diabetes. Nonetheless, there is evidence showing that obesity leads to more depression making it a vicious cycle between body and mind issues. For persons suffering from long-term depression or other anxiety disorders, regular physical activity is a critical part of the entire management procedure hence the couch-potato way of binge-watching does contribute negatively to mundane outcomes of body behaviour. The impact these consequences have on someone's overall well-being therefore makes it necessary that attention be given to addressing binge-watching's adverse impacts on both emotions as well as bodily frame of reference.²⁰

Mental Health and Emotional Well-being

Problematic binge-watching is associated with mental health challenges, particularly increased levels of loneliness, anxiety, and depression. The well-known solitary nature of binge-watching, where individuals spend long hours in isolation, can increase feelings of disconnection from society and can contribute to loneliness.¹⁴ Furthermore, the immersive nature of binge-watching can trigger anxiety and depression, as it leads individuals to neglect important aspects of life, thereby contributing to the development of depressive symptoms.²² There is evidence that suggests that binge-watching as a risk factor of mental health issues is usually seen in late adolescence and early adulthood period.^[8]

Social and Academic Implications

Despite the evidence which suggests a negative consequence of binge-watching, it also has a positive social and emotional outcome, when it comes to social interaction and emotional satisfaction. There are studies showing binge-watching can foster social connections. As viewers engage in discussions with their peers regarding the content of shows, it develops a sense of community and enjoyment that is shared.^[9,11] On the other hand, excessive watching can hurt academic performance and daily activities of life. Students who spend long hours watching shows, experience disrupted sleep patterns as they binge-watch at night, which can lead to poor academic performance.

Students tend to spend their time for studies watching shows or series.^[23]

Financial Burden

One of the less discussed but significant consequences of binge-watching is the financial burden associated with increased data consumption. Participants in a study revealed that their binge-watching habits led to a notable increase in spending on internet data bundles, ultimately straining their finances.^[23] This financial concern can vary with geographical locations where companies charge high fees for data and where the internet network's bandwidth is inadequate, compelling users to purchase additional data for uninterrupted streaming. The high data demands of streaming platforms, especially when downloading entire seasons of shows, can quickly lead to significant financial costs.

Cognitive and Emotional Benefits

On the positive side, binge-watching can also satisfy entertainment needs, and promote cognitive reserve and social exchanges.^[10] Binge-watching can provide a temporary escape from the daily stresses of life, offering relaxation and emotional expression. The shared viewing experience, particularly when co-viewing with others or discussing content on social media, further enhances this emotional benefit by fostering a sense of connection and shared enjoyment.^[12]

Regret

There is an observable tendency among binge-watchers in which they tend to regret after binge-watching. This will often be seen after an emotional reaction characterized by feelings associated with time wasted, individual neglect towards commitments, and their understanding of how harmful it might have been to both their physical and mental health. In connection with binge-watching, this might happen if a viewer recognizes having spent numerous hours watching episodes instead of doing promotional things considered more important for instance work, studying as well as maintaining oneself or even interacting with others socially. For instance, when they realize that they could have spent their time better somewhere else; hence all that remains is great remorse interspersed with mutual blame on themselves for being unable to restrict their TV habits.^[24]

While binge-watching can provide a sense of psychological well-being as a leisure activity, it can also become problematic affecting mental and cognitive health. This dual nature of binge-watching - being problematic and -being beneficial highlights the need for a balanced and systematic approach to media consumption, particularly among adolescents and early adulthood.

Binge-Watching as an Intervention Strategy

The relationship between binge-watching and loneliness is cyclical, as loneliness can lead to binge-watching and binge-watching can serve as an intervention to reduce the feelings of loneliness. People with type D personality disorders are characterized by a tendency to experience negative emotions and avoid social interactions. For those, binge-watching can serve as a mechanism to reduce loneliness. Research shows that individuals with type D personality disorders tend to binge-watch shows more frequently to reduce their loneliness. This suggests that binge-watching can temporarily decrease loneliness, particularly in those who are predisposed to social withdrawal and negative affectivity. It is also important to note that this complex relationship between loneliness and binge-watching may vary with different personality traits. Even though binge-watching shows reduces loneliness it could have negative consequences such as social withdrawal and an over-dependence on media to escape from reality.^[25]

Binge-watching can often be used as an escape mechanism and a source of relaxation from the stresses of everyday life. On one side, it offers a path for individuals to unwind and disconnect from responsibilities for a while. Engaging in back-to-back episodes of a favourite show allows viewers to immerse themselves in a different world, which can be both enjoyable and soothing. This form of media consumption can provide temporary relief from daily pressures and can be a source of comfort, especially when people seek a mental break from their hectic lives.^[8,26]

Binge-watching can also serve as a means of emotional release, offering a cathartic effect through media consumption. This suggests that individuals with binge-watching behaviour use it as a way to modulate their emotions through the fictional world they are involved in.

Moreover, the practice of co-viewing, where people binge-watch series or show with friends and family and share them on social media, experiences a sense of emotional sharing that further supports the emotional well-being of viewers. This hidden inherent social nature of binge-watching fosters a sense of connection and helps people to manage their emotions effectively, in the end making binge-watching a healthy outlet for emotional release.^[27]

Binge-watching, while offering temporary relief, exhibits a dual nature with positive and negative outcomes. On the negative aspect, it shares characteristics of behavioural addictions, including a loss of control, mood modification, and tolerance, leading to disruptions in daily life, sleep, and physical health. Problematic binge-watching is associated with mental health challenges such as anxiety and depression with notable consequences on academic performance, social interactions, and financial strain. On the other hand, it can also help in social connections, provide transient emotional release, and serve as a coping mechanism for loneliness and stress. This highlights its potential as a tool for emotional bonding and stress relief. However, its overuse can create a cycle of craving, emphasizing the importance of balanced media consumption.

DISCUSSION

This systematic review aimed to investigate binge-watching as a behavioural addiction, identify the factors influencing binge-watching, explore the consequences of binge-watching behaviour, and explain binge-watching as an intervention or coping strategy for problems encountered. The research question was answered based on the review of 22 full-text articles. The major findings were a) binge-watching can develop into a behavioural addiction marked by compulsive engagement and a loss of control, where individuals prioritize viewing over responsibilities despite being aware of the negative consequences b) binge-watching is primarily driven by psychological and emotional factors c) binge-watching has both positive and negative consequences including loneliness, depression, reduced sleep, disruption in daily activities, enhances social interaction and emotional satisfaction and d) binge-watching can be used as an intervention for problems like loneliness

and can be used as an escape mechanism for daily problems.

The discussions regarding binge-watching reveal it as both a behavioural addiction and a coping mechanism. As a behavioural addiction it reveals complex features such as compulsive engagement, mood enhancement, withdrawal features, difficulty in daily activities and influence health.^[9,10] Apart from promoting sleep deprivation, low grades, and mental disorders, binge-watching is a short-term solution for personal problems that are coupled with emotional isolation, social anxiety, and mental illness.^[15,21] On the other hand, it could offer cognitive and emotional benefits by employing relaxation and co-watching encouraging social bonds.^[27]

The complexity of binge-watching as a possible addiction and coping strategy requires the formulation of intervention strategies that address both its positive and negative sides. The adverse effects of binge-watching could be minimized by educational programs that encourage healthy media consumption practices and promote alternative coping strategies. Besides, there's a need for more studies to look into the long-term effects of binge-watching across different population groups; this will help in developing targeted interventions that address the particular needs of people involved in problematic binge-watching.

Psychiatric social workers can play a critical role in tackling binge-watching addiction by addressing its root causes and consequences. Beyond direct practice, they can be involved in systemic changes through media education and policy-level changes such as introducing screen time guidelines.

To sum up, binge-watching signifies a great transformation in how people consume media with good and bad implications. It is important to have an in-depth understanding of this kind of behaviour that takes into consideration its potentiality for addiction as well as emotional and social aspects to come up with effective measures against it. For balanced use, media promotion can take place

CONCLUSION

With its antecedents, consequences, and potential for use as an intervention strategy, binge-watching may be classified as a

behavioural addiction. It is important to note that binge-watching may be widespread in today's culture of media consumption, and as such, it may have a significant negative impact on people's mental health, productivity at work, and social interactions. This can cause it to turn into a behavioural addiction in which the person is constantly driven to interact with media content at the expense of their everyday well-being, possibly leading to anxiety disorders, poor academic performance, or even insomnia.

Binge-watching has been identified with several psychological and emotional problems, such as the desire to escape reality, loneliness, and social anxiety. These seem to be the ways into the vicious circle of binge-watching, by which people would try to escape their problems, remaining in their use of media consumption for extended amounts of time, when those problems will arise eventually. At the same time, this negative trend and impact of binge-watching are still capable of producing positive social effects and temporary emotional relief, especially where such an activity is combined with other practices allowing for community building and interpersonal relationships.

The dual nature of binge-watching needs to be taken into account in the development of comprehensive intervention strategies. Psychiatric social workers can play a crucial role in developing and implementing intervention methods at the micro, macro, and mezzo levels. This implies the design and implementation of educational projects that foster either healthy media use habits or other coping strategies. There is also a need for the long-term consequences of binge-watching to be better investigated to establish targeted interventions adapted to the particular needs of problematic binge-watchers. The other way around, because binge-watching represents a sea change in how humans consume media, developing a better understanding of its ability to addict coupled with its effect on the mind and society will help create practical solutions. Being aware of its advantages and disadvantages will enable stakeholders to develop policies which encourage moderate media consumption without compromising the overall well-being of people.

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