



Research Article

When “the Next Episode” Is Too Much? Watching TV Series as a Non-Adaptive Coping Strategy

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Abstract

Binge-watching has become a usual behavior for many people, especially during the COVID-19 pandemics, satisfying immediate needs for relaxation. However, concerns were raised about using binge-watching as a coping mechanism, as it usually becomes a maladaptive coping style, leading to serious mental health issues such as loneliness, depression, anxiety, and sleep problems. The objective of this study is to identify the relations between binge-watching as a way of coping and several variables that were identified as effects of excessive television consumption: problematic behavior, loneliness, and procrastination. The results showed that individuals with high scores for using coping as a reason for watching TV series or movies tend to have high scores in terms of problematic behavior when it comes to television watching. Moreover, watching series as a strategy for coping was a good predictor for developing problematic binge-watching behaviors regarding television. The associations between excessive binge-watching, loneliness and procrastination was confirmed in this study with a moderate effect, similar to other studies in literature. Further research is needed to expand the conclusions to other participants than adolescents and young adults.

Keywords: problematic binge-watching; loneliness; procrastination; binge-watching as coping.

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In the contemporary discourse, “binge-watching”, i.e., the act of consecutively viewing numerous episodes of a television series in one uninterrupted session, has become a focal point of considerable interest within popular media. The phenomenon of binge-watching has developed in recent years as a new way of consuming information ([Starosta et al., 2021](#)).

The Netflix streaming platform came up with the first definition of binge-watching in 2013, which covered the viewing of minimum 2 consecutive episodes of a TV series in a single viewing session ([Schweidel & Moe, 2016](#)). [Walton-Pattison et al. \(2018\)](#) defined binge-watching as the consecutive viewing of multiple episodes (at least 2-3) of the same series, distinguishing it from regular sports watching.

However, as the scientific literature has not come up yet with a reliable definition, the line between normal TV series watching and binge-watching is still blurred. This entire study will encompass the term “binge-watching” as a generic reference to the activity of watching TV series, taking into consideration the definition that includes watching a minimum of 2 episodes in one session. Given the broad range of conceptualizations of binge-watching concerning time, this study primarily relies on the motivational elements and their relations with the cognitive and behavioral aspects of individuals.

In some studies, the duration of binge-watching sessions varied depending on the reasons for watching series (e.g., when people watched out of boredom, the sessions were shorter than those initiated for relaxation or escapism purposes) ([Castro et al., 2019](#)).

Some researchers analyzed the positive aspects of binge-watching, such as [Flayelle et al. \(2019a\)](#), who argued that binge-watching can be considered a normal behavior and a good way to relieve stress or connect with others through discussions about popular series. Additionally, [Vaterlaus et al. \(2019\)](#) explained in their study how students claim that binge-watching is a way

to cope with mental health issues, such as anxiety or depression. [Song et al. \(2021\)](#) demonstrated in their study that people's positive attitude toward binge-watching is influenced by positive aspects such as entertainment, stress relief, social interaction and opportunities to spend leisure time.

[Flayelle et al. \(2020\)](#) examined more articles on this research topic, capturing findings from both the realm of positive and negative effects. These researchers concluded that binge-watching is a concept with non-uniform definitions and operationalizations that requires greater attention and efforts in structuring an overarching picture.

From the perspectives of early researchers who analyzed media consumption through various modalities, this phenomenon was described as "a unique experience due to its passive nature for the consumer" ([Lowery & DeFleur, 1983](#), p.2). The authors drew a comparison between traditional interpersonal communication and communication through media such as radio, television programs, and movies, which do not require advanced linguistic or intellectual skills from the audience. Thus, it can be concluded that even series, a more complex form of movies, represents a passive means of information communication that does not demand active engagement and, consequently, does not consume significant resources.

Studies indicate that people predominantly watch television during weekdays, both in the evening and during the day ([Castro et al., 2019](#)). The primary reasons why people choose to watch fictional series include relaxation, boredom relief, and escapism ([Castro et al., 2019](#)).

Due to the growing popularity of this phenomenon, excessive binge-watching has generated the attention of numerous researchers who raised questions about how this information consumption affects people's mental health and behavior ([Raza et al, 2021](#); [Starosta et al., 2021](#); [Sun & Chang, 2021](#)). In the current year, impressive numbers have been recorded in terms of subscribers to streaming platforms such as Netflix - 223 million ([Stoll, 2023a](#)), Amazon Prime Video - 200 million ([Stoll, 2023b](#)), Disney Plus - 161.8 million ([Ruby, 2023](#)), HBO Max – 96.1 million ([Susic, 2023](#)), and so on.

Theoretical Perspectives

Uses and Gratifications

This study is based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which elucidates how individuals fulfill their social and psychological needs through media consumption, be it through

television or the internet (Ruggiero, 2000). Streaming platforms offer a new way to watch series or movies, providing flexibility and control to users. From the perspective of the gratification theory, this encourages people to satisfy specific needs more easily (entertainment, distraction from problems, escapism, etc.) through binge-watching (Vaterlaus et al., 2019).

In the context of Vaterlaus et al.'s (2019) study, the application of the UGT reveals that excessive television viewing in the lives of students is facilitated by their social environment and the awareness that it is a common activity among their peers, creating a sense of association and normalization. Furthermore, the existence of para-social interactions is worth mentioning, referring to the development of an imaginary intimate relationship between the person watching a specific content on television and the characters encountered in the media or series (Rokach, 2019). Researchers highlight an analogy between real and para-social relationships, suggesting that individuals with a higher need for belonging to a group are predisposed to developing connections with characters (Gardner et al., 2005, as cited in Rokach, 2019). Stivers (2004) discussed earlier the effects of television on certain cognitive aspects, such as memory, intensification of emotions, perception of images, distortion of reality, and how we relate to it through comparison (aspects of reality pale in comparison to what is presented on television).

The central theme of Lindemann's research (1944, as cited in Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) underscored that people use denial or avoidance as a coping mechanism that provides short-term emotional relief, but can render individuals more vulnerable in the face of similar stress-inducing situations in the long term. Researchers have emphasized that the association between binge-watching and certain mental health issues such as depression, loneliness, and sleep problems became substantially stronger during the COVID-19 pandemic compared to earlier periods (Alimoradi et al., 2022).

Duvenage et al. (2020) listed the reasons why individuals turn to technology, using the theoretical approach of UGT: seeking emotional support, distraction, and information when experiencing emotional aversions. Studies related to immediate gratification have highlighted that nearly any type of content presented on television can serve to satisfy a multitude of audience needs and functions (Rosengren & Windahl, 1972, as cited in Katz et al., 1973).

Aghababian et al.'s (2021) analysis during the pandemic period demonstrated how television viewing serves as a coping mechanism for managing negative emotions or problems we

encounter - an effect that is intended to be observed as a lasting consequence in people's current behavior.

The detailed findings of [Flayelle et al. \(2019a\)](#) revealed that watching TV series is a relaxation activity that can satisfy immediate needs, and problematic behaviors related to binge-watching can be generated by other behavioral issues developed because of excessive viewing, not necessarily by the activity itself. The participants in [Vaterlaus et al.'s \(2019\)](#) study claimed that excessive television viewing can lead to mental health deterioration in terms of managing depressive symptoms, addictions, and the stress generated by procrastination - delaying tasks they must complete.

Coping and Emotional Regulation

The central function of a coping mechanism is to reduce tension and restore balance ([Lazarus & Folkman, 1984](#)). Binge-watching is adopted as a coping mechanism when we face demanding situations in our daily lives, but it can be associated with a multitude of mental health issues, particularly stress and anxiety ([Alimoradi et al., 2022](#)). Researchers have relied on empirical data analysis, showing that young people who regularly use the online environment (including binge-watching TV series or movies) as a coping mechanism have poorer outcomes in handling stressful events ([Duvenage et al., 2020](#)). This raises concerns about the vulnerability of young people in the online environment, as seeking emotional support, distraction, and information are indicators of poor well-being.

In a systematic analysis of multiple articles on binge-watching, [Flayelle et al. \(2019a\)](#) suggested that the link between negative emotions and problematic binge-watching categorizes this activity as part of emotion-focused coping strategies. Summarizing various scholarly articles, [Zimmer-Gembeck and Skinner \(2016\)](#) concluded that emotion-focused coping methods lead to negative outcomes in the adaptation process, mentioning consequences such as depression, anxiety, loneliness, and suicidal ideation. [Compas et al. \(2001\)](#) observed that coping strategies most frequently associated with dysfunctional adaptation include cognitive and behavioral avoidance, unrealistic wishes, social withdrawal, blame, resignation, emotional discharge, and self-criticism (as cited in [Zimmer-Gembeck & Skinner, 2016](#)).

The current study examines binge-watching as an emotion-focused coping method. [Folkman & Lazarus' analysis \(1984\)](#) specified that this strategy is employed when a person evaluates the situation as unchangeable regarding harmful or threatening conditions in their environment.

Following focus groups, interviews about the habits and routines of individuals who watched TV series extensively, and a review of the literature, [Flayelle et al. \(2022\)](#) concluded that problematic behaviors related to binge-watching lead to the formation of a maladaptive coping style. These behaviors can result from the interaction between negative reinforcement motives (e.g., managing loneliness, escaping daily problems) and dispositional impulsivity related to emotional regulation ([Flayelle et al., 2022](#)).

[Duvenage et al. \(2020\)](#) showed that adolescents who consistently use the online environment as a coping strategy do not experience short-term emotional improvement, but rather face feelings of worry or jealousy. Many studies have noted an association between binge-watching behaviors and serious mental health issues such as loneliness, depression, anxiety, and sleep problems ([Alimoradi et al., 2022](#); [Starosta et al., 2021](#); [Sun & Chang, 2021](#)). [Starosta et al. \(2021\)](#) mentioned that the anxious-depressive syndrome leads to the motivation for escapism (from routine or reality), with people watching series to divert their minds from negative emotions and the problems they face.

[Sun and Chang \(2021\)](#) identified a significant association between binge-watching and mental health outcomes like loneliness, anxiety in social interactions, and depression. [Rokach \(2019\)](#) pointed out that experiencing loneliness can have beneficial effects alongside the discomfort it induces. Thus, we discover new resources of which we were previously unaware, become more aware of our emotions, and generally become more engaged in the process of living ([Rokach, 2019](#)). [Batik and Demir \(2022\)](#) concluded that binge-watching is significantly and positively correlated with various personality traits such as negative affect and social inhibition, as well as loneliness.

Furthermore, [Rubenking and Bracken \(2018\)](#) showed that emotional regulation plays a significant role in binge-watching, being a primary reason why people get lost in extended series viewing. On a different note, problematic technology use and identification with characters in series are positively correlated with feelings of loneliness, serving as coping and compensatory mechanisms for neglected social needs ([Gabbiadini et al., 2021](#)).

Problematic Behavior, Loneliness and Procrastination

As catalysts for excessive internet use and media consumption, social support, feelings of isolation, and loneliness are considered factors that make individuals vulnerable and lead to the formation of such behaviors ([Flayelle et al., 2019a](#)). In other words, when people cannot meet

their social or psychological needs with resources in real life, they turn to alternatives in the online environment.

[Vaterlaus et al. \(2019\)](#) mentioned that students are aware of the possible addictive aspects of binge-watching. Generally, media usage behaviors seen as undesirable habits are associated with a perception of a lack of control ([Rubenking & Bracken, 2018](#)). [Song et al. \(2021\)](#) supported through their findings the importance of self-control in the attitude towards binge-watching and the inclination to engage in problematic behavior.

Being a controversial topic with mixed results in the literature, binge-watching falls on the border between normal and problematic when it comes to its effects on behavior ([Flayelle et al., 2022](#)). However, following the development of a scale that measures problematic series-watching behaviors (The Problematic Series Watching Scale - PSWS), researchers have added binge-watching to the list of factors that can lead to dependency behaviors ([Flayelle et al., 2019a](#)).

[Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi \(2002\)](#) spoke of the soothing effect of watching television, which has the potential to create addiction like other drugs. Researchers explained this happens by TV providing viewers with a sense of relaxation that disappears instantly upon interruption of viewing, causing a sudden drop in endorphin release ([Flayelle et al., 2019a](#)). As a result, viewers may experience withdrawal symptoms, such as sadness and a decrease in energy levels.

[Rokach \(2019\)](#) provided a synthesis and analysis of what loneliness means, mentioning the conclusion of several theorists and therapists over the years: humans are social beings and, therefore, need relationships with others to maintain their well-being. [Sonderby \(2013, as cited in Rokach, 2019\)](#) approached loneliness from two perspectives: social needs, with a perspective that focuses on the emotional aspects of loneliness and social relationships; and the cognitive perspective, which highlights an individual's perception of the quality and quantity of their social relationships. Social skills represent significant resources in coping mechanisms due to their important role in the functional adaptation process of humans ([Lazarus & Folkman, 1984](#)).

In a study on the conceptualization and effects of excessive TV watching, [Vaterlaus et al. \(2019\)](#) collected opinions from a sample of student on four dimensions: physical health, responsibilities, social experiences, and mental health. From a social perspective, the students in the study of [Vaterlaus et al. \(2019\)](#) attested that binge-watching can lead to negative consequences such as distancing from others and avoiding human interactions, explaining how excessive TV watching

is likely to shape a personality that causes discomfort around others. Watching television requires a low number of resources, which means that cognitively it is less demanding than switching to another activity (that may involve memory or attention, for example), favoring media consumption behaviors (Gabbiadini et al., 2021).

According to Duvenage et al. (2020), loneliness was positively associated with frequent seeking of emotional support and information online, being generated by stress and symptoms of internalization. As a phenomenon specific to people who feel lonely or alienated, Rokach (2019) considered watching television and sending messages as treatments for the general anxiety experienced by disconnected individuals. She mentioned several facets of this activity, such as using television for "company," stating that people find it comforting to have the television on as background noise to fill the void (Rokach, 2019). Although this leisure activity can often help with relaxation or in other positive ways, it is very easy to transition from regular TV watching to unhealthy binge-watching (Starosta et al., 2021).

The analysis of the studies mentioned above does not specify a causal chain between loneliness and binge-watching or binge-watching and loneliness; they all focus on interpreting correlations. Summarizing the points mentioned, both loneliness and binge-watching can be the cause of the presence of the other, but this study operates on the premise that individuals who have a high level of loneliness may exhibit problematic behaviors regarding TV watching or use this activity as a coping strategy.

With a focus on individual traits and situational aspects, Lay (1986) brought new defining elements at the time: the procrastinators exhibit disorganization at both cognitive and daily activity levels; they have an irrational attitude towards achieving goals by postponing them; they are less receptive to the opinions of others about "what they should do." Other authors consider procrastination as a conscious motivation method for individuals who need a stronger stimulus, working more efficiently when they feel pressure (Ferrari et al., 1995).

The *Temporal Motivation Theory* of Steel and König integrates elements from the expectancy theory (people's motivation increases with the certainty of success, obtaining a desired reward, or a valuable outcome), along with elements from decisional behavioral theory and needs theory (motivation decreases as there is a delay in reward and if the person is vulnerable to this delay) (Steel et al., 2018). A longitudinal study showed that people choose to put aside satisfactory results for immediate rewards (they chose to procrastinate), but which are much less consistent

(Steel et al., 2018). Researchers talked about how technological advancement facilitates mechanisms to meet our needs in the short term and with significant long-term costs, putting us at a disadvantage because we are constantly surrounded by more accessible but qualitatively inferior options (Steel et al., 2018).

A popular and accessible way to procrastinate today is watching movies or series. Binge-watching is significantly and positively correlated with people's habits (Rubenking & Bracken, 2018), suggesting that this activity has become automated and is deeply ingrained in our behavior.

In the work of Paulus and Aziz (2023), a significant positive correlation was noted between binge-watching and academic procrastination, with binge-watching being a predictor for procrastination. Also, in the academic sphere, students talked about the stress created by procrastination behaviors in terms of completing mandatory tasks because of binge-watching sessions (Vaterlaus et al., 2019). Researchers confirmed the link between problematic binge-watching behaviors, loss of control, and the procrastination process, leading to unsatisfactory outcomes in the professional or academic arena (Chamblis et al., 2017, as cited in Starosta et al., 2019).

The current study

The primary objective of this study is to advance the existing body of specialized literature concerning the comprehensive analysis of the binge-watching phenomenon and its resultant effects of heightened behavioral tendencies. The central tenant of this research revolves around the notion that the utilization of television consumption as a mechanism for coping or escaping from reality may lead to the formation of troublesome inclinations, including addictive conduct, loss of control, binge-watching and procrastination. Concurrently, the relationship between the feeling of loneliness and binge-watching behaviours and its intricate role in motivating the consumption of television series content is aimed to be analysed in our investigation. Specifically, the following hypotheses were aimed to be tested in our study. Concurrently, our investigation aims to analyze the relationship between the feeling of loneliness and binge-watching behaviors and its intricate role in motivating the consumption of television series content. Specifically, the study aimed to test the following hypotheses:

H1: People who often use watching TV shows as a way of coping tend to have a high problematic behavior regarding TV watching.

H2: Coping as a motive for watching series is a predictor in the development of problematic TV viewing behaviors.

H3: A high level of loneliness is positively associated with high problem binge-watching behavior.

H4: People with an increased level of loneliness tend to use binge-watching more often as a way of coping.

H5: People who often choose to watch series as a form of coping tend to have higher levels of procrastination.

H6: People who have high problematic binge-watching behavior tend to show high levels of procrastination.

Method

Participants and Procedure

The study was conducted from December 2022 to February 2023. Data were collected through a questionnaire distributed via Google Forms on social media platforms (Instagram and Facebook). The criteria for the research group were to watch TV series. The study was anonymous, and no personal data were collected during the study. Selection for the research group was deliberated.

A total of 175 participants from Romania took part in this study. The sample included 111 women (63.4%) and 64 men (36.6%). Participants were 18 years or older: 135 were gen Z (77.2% between 18 and 25), 23 millennials (13.1% between 26 and 35), and 17 gen X (9.7% aged above 35). The relationship status was almost split in half: 93 were single (53.1%) and 82 in a relationship (46.9%).

Measures

Coping/Escapism

The subscale *Coping/Escapism* from *Watching TV series Motives Questionnaire* (WTSMQ -) was used. The scale is composed of 8 items designed to measure to what degree people use TV series as a coping strategy or for escaping motives. Sample item: "I watch TV series to

relieve stress, anxiety or negative emotions” (1=*not at all among my reasons I watch TV series* to 5=*exactly the reasons I watch TV series*).

Problematic binge-watching behavior

For measuring the problematic behaviors of binge-watching TV series, we summed the values of 3 subscales from *Binge-Watching Engagement and Symptoms Questionnaire* (): *Dependency, Loss of control, and Binge-watching*. The *Dependency* scale has 5 items (e.g., “I am usually in a bad mood, sad, depressed, or annoyed when I can't watch any TV series, and I feel better when I am able to watch them again. “). The *Loss of control* has 7 items (e.g., “I sometimes fail to accomplish my daily tasks so I can spend more time watching TV series.“). The *Binge-watching* has 6 items (e.g., “I always need to watch more episodes to feel satisfied.“). All items are scored from 1=*totally disagree* to 4=*totally agree*.

Loneliness

The UCLS Loneliness Scale was used to measure one's subjective feeling of loneliness and social isolation. The scale has 20 items. Sample item: “There is no one I can turn to.” (1=*I never feel this way* to 5=*I always feel this way*). Cronbach's alpha for the scale was very good, .91.

Procrastination

Participants' tendency for procrastination was measured with the Procrastination Scale suggested by Lay (1986). This scale was designed to measure students' procrastination; therefore, we changed some items (e.g., “I usually start an assignment shortly after it is assigned.“ was modified into „I usually start a task shortly after it is assigned.“). The scale has 20 items. Sample item: “I generally delay before starting on work I must do.“ (1=*extremely uncharacteristic* to 5=*extremely characteristic*). Cronbach's alpha for the scale was very good, .90.

Results

H1. People who often use watching TV shows as a way of coping tend to have a high problematic behavior regarding TV watching.

Figure 1 presents the strong, positive relation between variables.

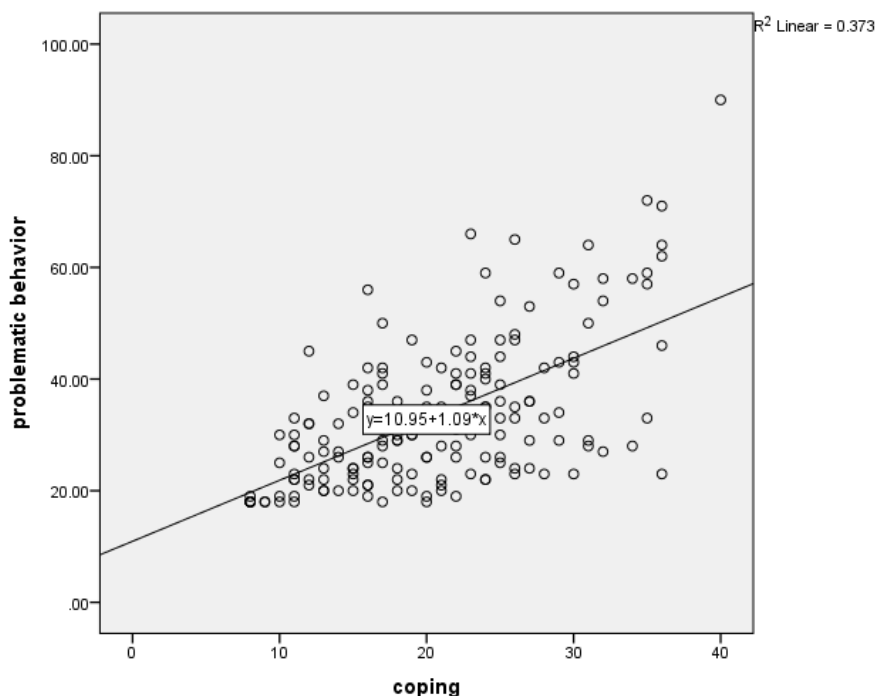


Figure 1. *Relationship between watching TV series as a way of coping and problematic behavior (scatterplot)*

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was conducted to verify the normality of the distributions, and the results were $KS = .065$, $p > .05$ for *watching TV shows as a way of coping* (normal distribution) and $KS = .118$, $p < .01$ for *problematic behavior* (asymmetrical distribution). As such, Spearman's rho was used to assess the relationship between the two variables, and a strong, positive correlation was found: $r(173) = .56$, $p < .001$.

H2: Coping as a motive for watching series is a predictor in the development of problematic TV viewing behaviors.

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to predict the level of problematic TV viewing behavior based on watching TV series as a way of coping. A significant regression equation was found ($F(1,173) = 102.87$, $p < .001$), with an R^2 of .37. Participants' predicted level of problematic TV viewing behavior is equal to $10.95 + 1.09$ (watching TV series as a way of coping).

H3: A high level of loneliness is positively associated with high problem binge-watching behavior.

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was conducted to verify the normality of the distributions for the two variables, and the results were $KS = .145$, $p < .01$ for *loneliness* (asymmetrical distribution) and $KS = .168$, $p < .01$ for *problematic behavior* (also asymmetrical distribution). Spearman's rho was used to assess the relationship between the two variables, and a weak, positive correlation was found: $r(173) = .23$, $p < .001$ (see Figure 2).

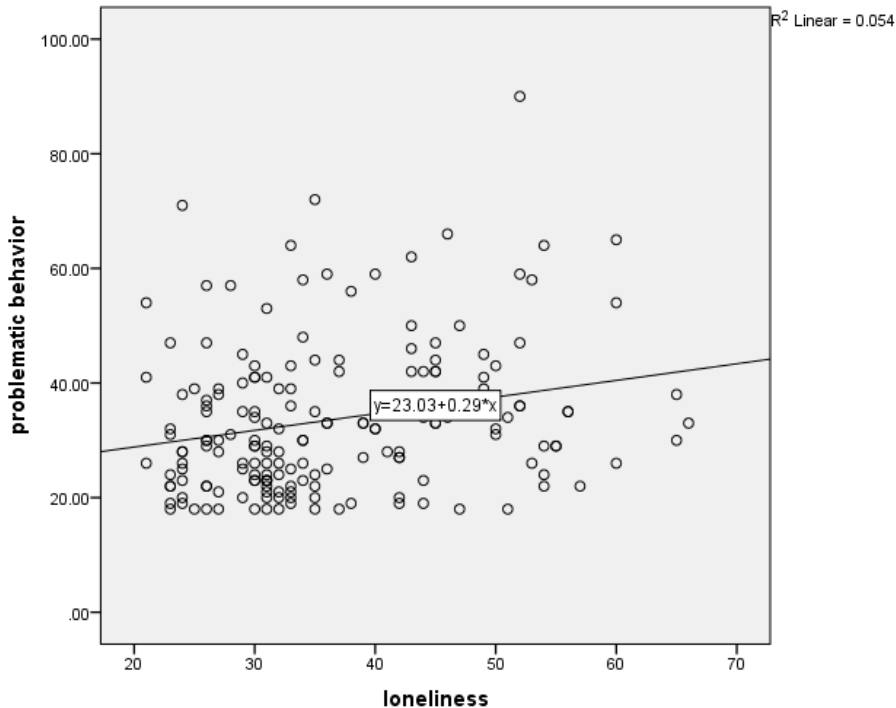


Figure 2. Relationship between loneliness and problematic behavior (scatterplot)

H4: People with an increased level of loneliness tend to use binge-watching more often as a way of coping.

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was conducted to verify the normality of the distributions for the two variables, and the results were $KS = .145$, $p < .01$ for *loneliness* (asymmetrical distribution) and $KS = .069$, $p > .05$ for *binge watching as a way of coping* (normal distribution). Spearman's rho was used to assess the relationship between the two variables, and a weak, positive correlation was found: $r(173) = .25$, $p < .001$ (see Figure 3).

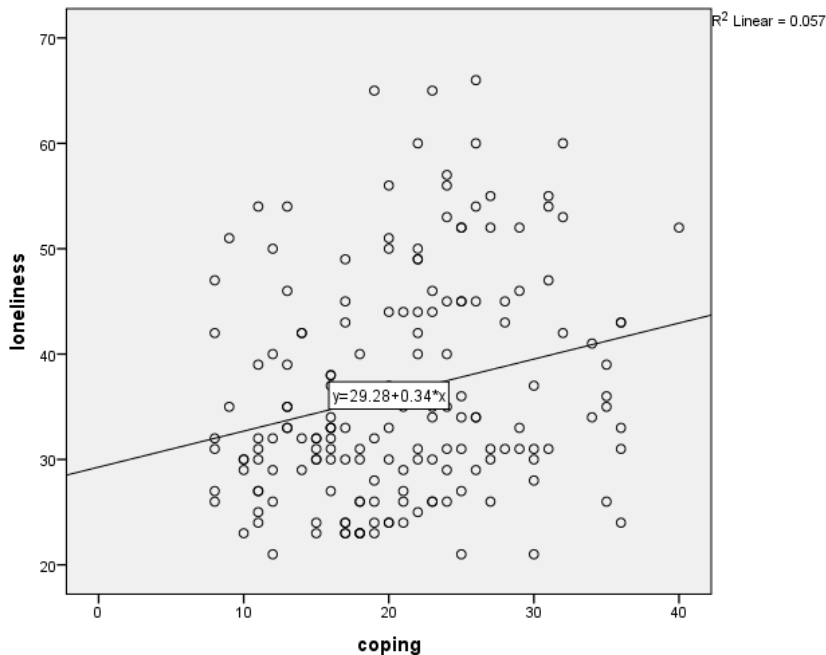


Figure 3. Relationship between loneliness and using binge-watching as a way of coping (scatterplot)

H5: People who often choose to watch series as a form of coping tend to have higher levels of procrastination.

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was conducted to verify the normality of the distributions for the two variables, and the results were $KS = .069$, $p > .05$ for *binge watching as a way of coping* (normal distribution) and $KS = .20$, $p > .05$ for *procrastination* (normal distribution). Pearson's r was used to assess the relationship between the two variables, and a moderate, positive correlation was found: $r(173) = .36$, $p < .001$ (see Figure 4).

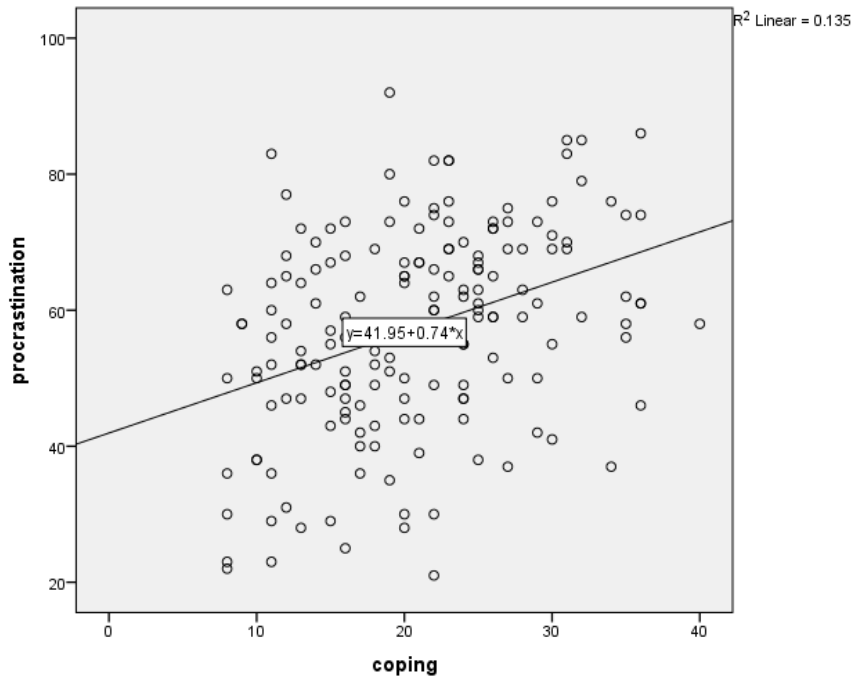


Figure 4. Relationship between binge-watching as a way of coping and procrastination (scatterplot)

H6: People who have high problematic binge-watching behavior tend to show high levels of procrastination.

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was conducted to verify the normality of the distributions for the two variables, and the results were $KS = .001$, $p < .01$ for *problematic binge-watching behavior* (asymmetrical distribution) and $KS = .20$, $p > .05$ for *procrastination* (normal distribution). Spearman's rho was used to assess the relationship between the two variables, and a moderate, positive correlation was found: $r(173) = .35$, $p < .001$ (see Figure 5).

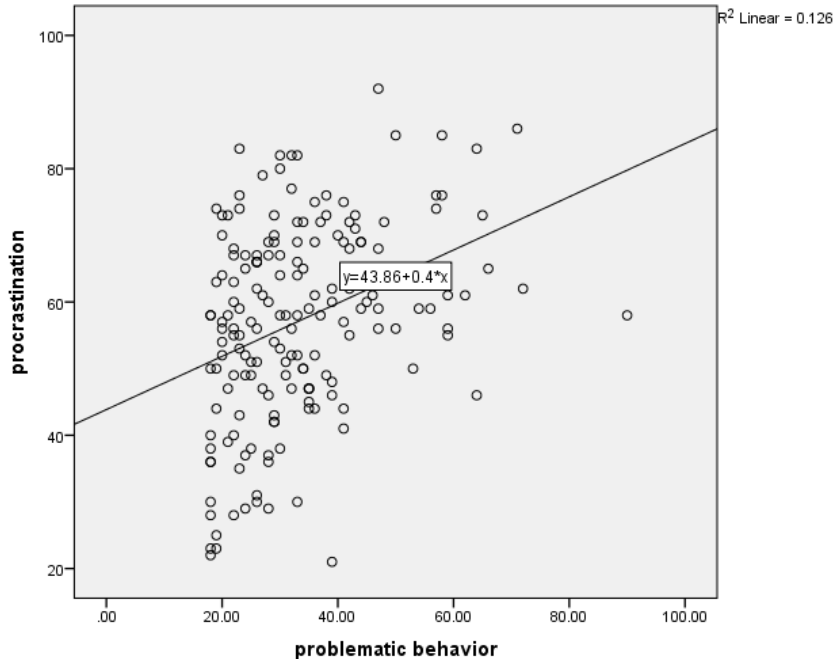


Figure 5. Relationship between problematic behavior and procrastination (scatterplot)

Discussion

In recent years, literature has made progress in the conceptual delimitation of binge-watching and its effects on behaviors and attitudes. With the aim of drawing attention to the fine line that separates normal behaviors from problematic ones, this study attempted to identify associations between using binge-watching as a coping or escapism mechanism and negative aspects that can affect daily life (e.g., addiction, loss of control, binge-watching, loneliness, procrastination).

The present study showed that individuals with high scores for using coping as a reason for watching TV series or movies tend to have high scores in terms of problematic behavior when it comes to television watching. Due to inadequate emotional regulation processes, people tend to excessively watch TV series or movies to distract themselves from their problems or thoughts, as demonstrated in previous studies (Flayelle et al., 2020). Moreover, watching series as a strategy for coping was a good predictor for developing problematic binge-watching behaviors regarding television. Rubenking et al. (2018) demonstrated in their study that people chose as a main reason for watching series the anticipation and elevation of general moods by distraction from everyday worries. Despite some findings that illustrate the positive association between

problematic binge-watching behavior and loneliness or lack of social interaction (Sun & Chang, 2021), we did not find a significant relationship between loneliness and problematic behavior regarding TV series watching. Even if in this research we identified a weak correlation, recent studies showed that escape motives are a mediating factor between the feeling of loneliness and identification with the characters in the TV series (Gabbadini et al., 2021).

Procrastination is a relatively new aspect studied in relationship to binge-watching as a consequence of this behavior. Since people tend to watch series to escape from problems or daily worries, this can lead to postponing tasks to experience a moment of disconnection in front of the TV, a situation also proven in other specialized studies (Rubenking et al., 2018). Coping as a motive to watch series was positively and moderately correlated to procrastination. Furthermore, procrastination was a significant predictor of excessive binge-watching behaviors, as demonstrated in the literature (Merrill & Rubenking, 2019). The associations between excessive binge-watching, loneliness and procrastination were confirmed in this study with a moderate effect, similar to other studies in the specialty literature (Starosta et al., 2019).

Limitations and Future Research Suggestions

This study has several limitations. For the subjective conceptual definition of binge-watching for participants, we did not use the number of episodes watched, and the time in hours was not relevant for the purpose of this study. In the specialized literature, there is no concrete definition of the concept and its operationalization (Castro et al., 2019). The research was conducted on a relatively small sample of subjects. A majority of participants fell into the 18-25 age range, which may limit the generalization of the results. Furthermore, we considered only one motive (coping) for watching TV series in establishing a relationship with problematic behaviors. No other motives were evaluated in this direction.

As a developing topic, binge-watching, and the reasons why people choose to watch series should be research questions analyzed in longitudinal and intervention studies. The literature does not provide a concrete definition, and there are limited numbers of studies measuring people's perception of what binge-watching means. The current work uses a scale to measure motives and behaviors for binge-watching series, but it would be constructive to develop measurement tools for binge-watching videos on YouTube or other social media platforms (Instagram, TikTok). Binge-watching videos may present different types of behaviors and cognitive consequences.

Individual traits might determine specific structures for binge-watching behaviors, how they form, and what sustains them. As other researchers have mentioned aspects related to temperament and personality (Mento et al., 2024), future studies could include in the experimental design variables such as low self-esteem or the tendency to social isolation. Since coping methods are shaped by the resources we have and are willing to access, low self-esteem and social isolation could explain the possible formations of problematic behaviors regarding watching series. Including the analysis of demographic variables such as gender, age, professional and relational status, etc., could help future work to establish more concrete differences or similarities between participants. Also, in future research it would be helpful to test subjects in a more controlled environment than online to prevent biases.

Conclusion

TV series have become one of the most popular activities nowadays. The popularity of this activity and the usage of the term binge-watching have encouraged us in the development of this study, focusing on the use of TV series as a coping strategy or an escape from reality and people's behaviors in relation to these aspects. In this study, you will find analyses of the relationships between coping/escape as a motive for watching TV series and psychological behavioral parameters (dependence, loss of control, procrastination) and emotional parameters (loneliness). Problematic binge-watching behaviors have been positively correlated with coping motives, loneliness, and procrastination, suggesting some of the negative implications of this extreme activity. Additionally, the coping motive can be considered a significant predictor in the formation of problematic binge-watching behaviors, including a dependent character and loss of control. The current research provides an important reference point in the development of future studies, enabling the expansion of knowledge about TV series watching and its psychological implications. Exploring this area in detail is necessary because the phenomenon of TV series is widespread worldwide and has become a significant part of our lives. The information provided by this study can lay out a starting point for new perspectives on excessive TV series watching behaviors and their implications for mental health. Essentially, this activity has its advantages, and awareness of the negative implications can encourage healthier practices when it comes to watching television.

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Competing Interests

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