

# Binge watching and mental well-being: Study on emerging adults

<sup>1</sup>Amrit Kaur Hans & <sup>2</sup>Harprit Kaur

## Abstract

With the advent of video on demand streaming services such as Netflix, Disney Hotstar, Amazon Prime Video, Sony Liv, binge watching has become a common media behaviour among the emerging adults, particularly aged 18 to 34. Binge watching, habit of watching TV shows or movies consecutively on internet-driven platforms at one's own discretion, is a double-edge sword, it could enhance viewer's well-being through perceived autonomy whereas excessive indulgence can reduce well-being through negative emotions such as guilt and regret. The purpose behind the present study was to determine the relationship between binge watching and mental well-being. In this study, data were collected with help of questionnaires such as BWESQ (Binge watching engagement and symptoms questionnaire) and MHC-SF (Mental Health Continuum-Short Form) while correlation, t-test and regression were employed to analyse the data. It was found that binge watching was significantly and negatively related to mental well-being and problematic binge watching significantly and negatively predict mental well-being. Further, results showed that males tend to engage in binge watching more than females and that males generally exhibit better mental well-being compared to females. This study highlights the complex relationship between user's mental health and binge watching behaviour, which can range from recreational to addictive on a continuum.

**Keywords:** *binge watching, well-being, emerging adults, gender*

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## About the authors:

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding author. PhD Scholar, Department of Psychology, Punjabi University, Patiala, Punjab, India. Correspondence email: [amrithans89@gmail.com](mailto:amrithans89@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Co-author. Professor, Department of Psychology, Punjabi University, Patiala, Punjab, India.



## 1. Introduction

The traditional form of linear television viewing where individuals would eagerly await the release of episodes of their favorite programs has been long replaced by nonlinear and asynchronous viewing, which allow the viewers to watch the television or film content at their own pace and convenience. Technological advancement including stable internet connections, personal media devices (mobile phone, laptop, iPad) and launch of over-the-top platforms (OTT) such as Netflix, Hot star, Prime Video, Hulu has made this shift possible. This expansion in entertainment sector has not only taken place globally but there has been significant growth of OTT market even in India. In the United States, 33 million people cut the cord on their traditional cable packages in 2018 and subscribed to Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime (Perez, 2018). Meta-commissioned report by BCG (2022) done over 2600 consumers across 15 towns and cities of India revealed that the number of OTT subscription video on demand (SVod) subscribers in India is growing faster with compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 51% for the year 2019-2022. In fact, Disney Hotstar is at the top of the Indian OTT video content market, with Amazon Prime Video, SonyLIV, Netflix, Voot, Zee5, ALTBalaji, and ErosNow following closely behind based on subscriber percentage (Counterpoint, 2023).

Streaming television has changed the way people consume TV or film content by allowing the viewers to personalize their viewing experience according to their preferences in terms of timing, content, location, and choice of media device. The widespread adoption of digital television has played a significant role in popularizing specific viewing style: binge watching. Researchers have varying definitions for binge-watching, with some based on the number of episodes consumed in one sitting (Walton- Pattinson et al., 2016) while others based on the time span (Wagner, 2016). Even so, binge watching could be understood as the act of watching multiple episodes of a television series in succession (Merikivi et al., 2019).

While binge watching is relatively new phenomenon, its historical roots lie in television marathons (watching multiple episodes of a single television show back-to-back). Earlier, it was not easily accessible to the viewer but now because of the internet driven streaming platforms it has become common media behaviour. According to Spangler (2016), 70% of American viewers watch an average of five episodes per binge-watching session and 88% of Netflix subscribers watch at least three episodes of the same program in one day. In the

Limelight Network's 'State of Online Video 2019' research report, it was found that young adults in India spend on an average 2 hours and 25 minutes on binge watching.

Binge watching phenomenon is observed across all age groups but it is extensively popular among emerging adults (Bastos et al., 2024; Subramanian & Das, 2024). Young Indians, under 35 years of age, accounted for 89% of the total Indian OTT video content platform users and male users account for 79% of the total users (Counterpoint, 2023). Various motivations could lead one to indulge in binge watching such as entertainment, relaxation, social interaction, escape and habit (Sung et al., 2018). While binge-watching may initially appear as a recreational activity, engaging in excessive recreational behavior like this can lead to serious negative consequences such as social isolation, loss of sleep and poor well-being (Starosta & Izydorczyk, 2020; Alimoradi et al., 2022). As per Global sleep survey (2023), 25% millennials reported that screens/electronic devices keep them up at night and 21% respondents reported that limiting their bed screen time has improved their sleep. Furthermore, there have been various instances recorded highlighting the adverse impacts of binge-watching habits. For instance, a 26-year-old man from Bangalore, who was jobless and spent more than eight hours daily watching online shows, received treatment at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences Service for Healthy Use of Technology clinic, Bangalore (Shekhar, 2018). Similarly, an 11-year-old boy committed suicide at home after being reprimanded by his father for his excessive YouTube video consumption (Correspondent, 2023) while a 72-year-old man in a professional occupation asked for assistance in controlling his excessive binge-watching of television series (Yasmeen, 2023).

Empirical evidence shows that binge-watching is on rise and it could affect the user's mental well-being in different and more prominent way than traditional TV viewing. Hence, the relationship between binge watching and mental well-being is of greater research interest.

## **2. Literature Review**

### ***2.1. Binge Watching and Mental Well-Being***

In recent years, research on binge watching has flourished and one of the prime reasons for this is that phenomenon of binge watching is currently on rise especially among the millennials in the age range of 18-39 years and is becoming significant aspect of their lifestyle (Starosta & Izydorczyk, 2020). According to Irvine (2016), nearly 86% of millennials (18-34

years) are binge watchers. Similarly, other studies also reported that people younger than 25 often use OTT services and binge watching is a common phenomenon among the university students (Chastin et al., 2017; Riddle et al., 2018). In India, 49% of Indian young adults engage in binge watching (Limelight Networks, 2019). The nature of binge watching behaviour is similar to other types of behavioural addictions like occurrence of withdrawal symptoms (emptiness, irritability), neglect of family and friends and so on (Flayelle et al., 2020; Troles, 2019). Binge watching behaviour could lead to compulsory or addictive behaviour (Starosta et al., 2019). Thus, the widespread adoption of this type of media consumption has raised worrying concerns regarding user's mental well-being.

Literature points out that binge watching could affect user's well-being in two distinct ways. On the one side, it may enhance user's well-being like by increasing viewer's enjoyment level, by providing relaxation and by increasing social interactions. Potential benefits of binge watching on viewer's well-being could stem from the sense of autonomy viewers experience while streaming their favorite shows continuously on VoD platforms due to the unrestricted access to their preferred series. Meeting this inherent desire for independence can greatly enhance the user's well-being (Pittman & Sheehan, 2015). Conversely, it could also prove detrimental to user's well-being as it could lead to goal conflicts and feelings of regret and guilt (Granow et al., 2018). Goal conflicts could have long term negative impact on life satisfaction, particularly when crucial goals such as academic work are consistently hindered by a lack of self-control over media usage (Hofmann et al., 2014; Panek, 2014). Regret developing from investing extensive time in binge watching instead of utilizing it for completing the responsibilities could lead to adverse mental health consequences including sleep disturbance, impaired social relationships and reduced life satisfaction (Bastos et al., 2024). Guilt could diminish the situational well-being in the moment or shortly after the series ended (Reinecke et al., 2014). Panda and Pandey (2017) also revealed that viewers engage in binge watching in order to relax themselves but instead get caught up in vicious cycle of engaging in binge watching to escape negative feelings, feeling negative emotions at the conclusion of binge watching series and then re-engaging in binge watching session.

Shim and Kim (2018) found that individuals perceive binge-watching as a way to satisfy their desires for enjoyment, efficiency, and control. In addition, Pitmann and Sheehan (2015) and Rubenking et al. (2018) revealed that people binge watch to relax, to manage their

mood, for passing time and for social interaction. Nevertheless, studies also revealed that prolonged continued binge-watching could impair day-to-day functioning (De Feijter et al., 2016), results in sleep deprivation (Brookes & Ellithorpe, 2017; Exelmans & Van den Bulck, 2017), and reduces the social life quality (Pérez & Díaz, 2017). Prior research also indicates that binge watching is linked to decreased positive affect right after viewing and post-binge-viewing “show hole”, i.e., a feeling of emptiness following show completion (Tefertiller, 2017). Past researches also pointed out that binge watching is linked with goal conflicts and emotional distress (i.e., guilt, regret) (Király et al., 2017; Panda & Pandey, 2017). This suggests that despite being a leisure activity, binge watching could have negative outcomes with respect to user’s mental well-being.

## ***2.2. Gender Differences***

Previous researches have shown that gender plays a key role in affecting many behaviours related to adoption of new technology such as internet usage and use of smartphones (Mari et al., 2023). Gender may also have an impact on binge-watching behavior. Existing literature presents differing perspectives on this matter. On one hand, studies indicate that binge watching is gender neutral phenomenon (Moore, 2015; Sun & Chang, 2021) and gender differences are only seen in terms of TV genre preference of men and women (Mento et al., 2024; Starosta & Izydorczyk, 2020) or in terms of types motivations behind the binge watching behaviour (Seifert, 2019). Research suggests that men tend to prefer watching science fiction and fantasy series while women lean towards comedy and drama series (Starosta & Izydorczyk, 2020). Further, Parson's concept of the instrumental-expressive dichotomy also implies that the divergence in TV viewing behaviors between males and females stems from their contrasting orientations, with males prioritizing goals and tasks, and females placing a higher emphasis on relationships and emotions. Men usually use television for individual purposes such as receiving information or feeling stimulated, whereas women tend to look for social and emotional fulfillment from TV (Nathanson et al., 1997). On the other hand, few studies pointed out that females tend to engage more in binge watching than males (Light Speed Research, 2016). Furthermore, recent research points out that females tend to watch more cable TV whereas males tend to watch more online content (Starosta & Izydorczyk, 2020).

It is also crucial to examine gender differences in mental well-being because literature suggests gender, culture, personality and socioeconomic status influence psychological well-being (Sharma et al., 2022). The study by Gomez-Baya et al. (2018) revealed that European women have low psychological well-being and more health problems in comparison to European men. However, study conducted by Sharma et al. (2022) revealed that females have better psychological well-being in comparison to their male counterparts. This points out that existing literature is inconclusive regarding gender differences in relation to binge watching behaviour and mental well-being.

### ***2.3.Theoretical Perspective***

The rise of the binge watching behaviour could be explained with the help of Technology acceptance model (Davis, 1989), which states that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness are important factors in predicting the adoption of new technology. Binge watching has replaced the traditional viewing to a larger extent because of perceived ease of use. Nowadays, individuals can consume TV or film content at their own convenience and pace, facilitated by easy accessibility and affordability of internet driven streaming platforms. Further, the relationship between binge watching and mental well-being can be elucidated through the lens of User and Gratification (U & G) Theory (Katz et al., 1973). Historically, this theory has been utilized to comprehend media consumption behaviors such as television viewing and internet usage (Gangadharbatla et al., 2019; Katz et al., 1973; LaRose et al., 2001). U & G theory could also be applied to understand binge watching habits since binge watching encompasses elements of both television and the internet.

The theory of User and Gratification delves into why individuals choose to consume certain media and the outcomes of media consumption. It assumes that audiences are conscious of the gratifications they sought and actively choose different types of media to satisfy these diverse needs and accomplish personal goals. This framework is apt for studying binge watching phenomenon as its assumptions included key fundamental attributes of this behaviour: interactivity (more viewer autonomy), demassification (more viewer choice) and asynchronicity (choice to watch whatever they want and wherever they want using multiple media devices). U & G theory further explains that viewers seek five types of gratification through media consumption: to enjoy, to learn and get information, to escape from real life stressors, to enhance social connections and to identify with fictional media characters. Binge

watching could enhance user's well-being if they binge watch for entertainment and relaxation purpose or due to social motivation (Panda & Pandey, 2017; Pittman & Sheehan, 2015; Starosta & Izydorczyk, 2020). On the contrary, if binge watching is used as an escape motivation from daily life stressors, it could have detrimental effect on mental well-being as using binge watching as coping strategy could decrease the chance of using more adaptive coping strategies (Castro et al., 2019; Panda & Pandey, 2017; Starosta & Izydorczyk, 2020). Although research on binge watching has gained momentum, more studies are concerned with what leads to binge watching and fewer studies explore the consequences of binge watching. Furthermore, there is no definitive consensus regarding the gender differences on binge watching and mental well-being. Hence, the two main goals of this research are to explore the relationship between binge watching and mental well-being and to investigate the gender differences on binge watching and mental well-being.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Participants

The study sample comprised of students from various colleges and universities of Punjab, India. The sample consisted of 729 participants of which 64% were men and 36% were women. Respondents were between 18 and 25 years old, with an average of 19.75 years (SD = 1.72). Majority of the sample comprised of undergraduates (72%), from urban areas (68%) and lived mostly in hostels or PGs (41%). The major portion of the sample was single (95%) and belonged to the nuclear family (35%). Demographic characteristics are presented in table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Sociodemographic characteristics of the participants*

Characteristics	n	%	Characteristics	n	%
<b>Gender</b>			<b>Current Status of Residence</b>		
Female	255	35	Hostel	150	20.6
Male	474	65	PG	146	20.1
<b>Education Status</b>			Alone	48	6.6
Undergraduate	524	72	Nuclear Family	254	34.8
Graduate	170	23	Joint Family	131	17.9
Post Graduate	35	5	<b>Relationship Status</b>		
<b>Place of Residence</b>			Single	695	95.3
Rural	230	31.5	Committed	34	4.7
Urban	499	68.5	<b>Employment Status</b>		
			Employed	24	3.3
			Unemployed	705	96.7

*Note.* N=729. Participants were on average 19.75 years old (SD = 1.72).

### 3.2. Measures

***Binge Watching Engagement and Symptoms Questionnaire (BWESQ; Flayelle et al., 2019)***. Binge watching refers to the act of watching large number of episodes of television series or film content at one's own time and pace typically by means of internet-driven platforms. BWESQ assesses binge-watching engagement and features of problematic binge-watching. This questionnaire has seven subscales: engagement (extent of involvement in watching TV series), positive emotions (emotional benefits derived from watching TV series), desire-savoring (amount of desire for and appreciation of watching TV series), pleasure preservation (use of strategies aimed at maintaining or enhancing pleasure relating to watching TV series), binge watching (severity of continued viewing), dependency (difficulty abstaining from watching TV series) and loss of control (problematic involvement in binge-watching). The dimensions engagement, positive emotions, desire/savouring and pleasure preservation are considered as non- problematic dimensions whereas dimensions binge watching, dependency and loss of control are problematic dimensions of BWESQ. It is 40-item scale in which items are scored on 4-point Likert Scale with an average score being calculated for each scale. The score on each sub-scale has a range of 1 to 4 and higher score indicates either greater involvement or unhealthy binge watching. The developer's initial psychometric analysis of the instrument was conducted with individuals aged between 18 and 37 years. This scale has good psychometric properties with internal consistencies of subscales ranging from 0.65 to 0.83 (Flayelle et al., 2019).

***The Mental Health Continuum-Short Form (MHC-SF; Keyes, 2006; Keyes et al., 2008)***. Mental well-being refers to the positive state that encompasses three core components such as emotional well-being (measures one's satisfaction with life and balance of positive and negative affect), psychological well-being (measures one's intrapersonal reflection of how one adjusts in their life) and social well-being (measures how much individual see themselves flourishing in their social life). The MHC-SF (2009) is based on Ryffs model of psychological well-being, Keyes model of social well-being and Bradburn's affect balance scale. The MHC-SF scale measures individual's positive mental health. It has 14 items in which three items represent emotional well-being, six items represent psychological well-being, and five items represent social well-being. MHC-SF thus, could provide 3 subscale scores (emotional well-being, social well-being and psychological well-being). This scale could also yield continuous



global score in range of 0-70. Higher global score indicates higher mental well-being while a higher subscale score suggests that an individual exhibits a higher level of that specific aspect of well-being. The internal consistency of MHC-SF is high ( $\alpha > .80$ ) and discriminant validity is also excellent in adolescents (ages 12-18) and adults (18 years or above) (Westerhof & Keyes, 2010).

*General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12; Goldberg, 1972; Goldberg & Williams, 1988)*. It is a 12-item questionnaire which measures the general level of happiness, the experience of depressive and anxiety symptoms, perceived stress, and sleep disturbance over the previous 4 weeks. It is 4-point Likert scale in which scoring is done with help of binary scoring method with two least symptomatic answers scored 0 and the two most symptomatic answers scored 1 (0-0-1-1). The range of the scores obtained is from 0 to 12 with four as the cutoff point.

### **3.3. Procedure**

This study has a correlational design. Purposive sampling method was used to select the participants. The target group for this study was college and university students as they are more likely to engage in binge watching (Panda & Pandey, 2017). The criteria for the inclusion of the participants were age range of 18-25 years, not having any common mental health problems, having internet access, having the ability to understand English and providing the informed consent to participate in the study. It was a cross-sectional study and the data was collected using questionnaires through survey method from various colleges and universities of Punjab. By asking about their internet usage in demographic questions, it was confirmed that participants had access to the internet. The GHQ-12 was used to screen out the participants having common mental health problems such as insomnia. Additionally, using demographic questions, individuals who stated they do not engage in binge-watching were removed from the study. Percentages, t-test, correlation, and regression were utilized to analyze the data from 729 participants.

The ethical clearance was obtained from the Institutional Ethics Committee (IEC) of Punjabi University, Patiala. All participants were informed about the study's purpose and procedure was explained to the participants in the language they understand. The ethical rights of voluntarily participation, confidentiality, informed consent, and anonymity were observed.

## 4. Results

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviations for all the variables. Pearson Correlation was used to determine the relationship between dimensions of well-being and binge watching.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive statistics for psychological variables*

Variables	M	SD	Range
BWESQ			
Engagement	2.21	0.52	1-4
Desire/Savouring	2.56	0.58	1-4
Pleasure Preservation	2.22	0.66	1-4
Positive Emotions	2.56	0.54	1-4
Binge Watching	2.19	0.56	1-4
Dependency	2.10	0.57	1-4
Loss of Control	2.10	0.52	1-4
Mental Well-Being total score	42.62	14.00	0-70
Emotional Well-Being	10.10	3.50	0-15
Social Well-Being	13.10	6.01	0-25
Psychological Well-Being	19.39	6.54	0-30

*Note.* N=729. Binge watching engagement and symptoms questionnaire (BWESQ) has seven sub scales (engagement, desire/savouring, pleasure preservation, positive emotions, binge watching, dependency and loss of control) and total mental well-being assessed by Mental Health Continuum- Short Form (MHC-SF) comprises of emotional well-being, social well-being and psychological well-being.

The results showed that emotional and psychological well-being were negatively and significantly correlated with all the dimensions of binge watching (engagement, desire/savouring, positive emotions, pleasure preservation, binge watching, dependency and loss of control). The correlation between social well-being and dimensions of binge watching also came out to be negative and significant except for the dimension engagement. In other words, this means that higher involvement in binge watching is related to poor well-being. Table 3 reports all the correlations.

**Table 3***Correlations for study variables*

Variables	Engagement	Desire	Pleasure	Positive Emotion	Binge Watching	Dependency	Loss of Control
Emotional Well-Being	-.17**	-.11**	-.21**	-.13**	-.22**	-.16**	-.21**
Social Well-Being	-.06	-.10**	-.11**	-.12**	-.12**	-.08*	-.14**
Psychological Well-Being	-.16**	-.11**	-.20**	-.11**	-.24**	-.21**	-.29**
Total Mental Well-Being	-.15**	-.12**	-.19**	-.13**	-.22**	-.17**	-.25**

*Note.* N=729. \*p < .05. \*\*p < .01.

**Table 4***Stepwise linear regression predicting total mental well-being*

Variable	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	95% CI
Constant	56.41	2.08	-	27.14	.001	[52.32, 60.5]
Loss of Control	-6.63	.96	-.25	-6.9	.001	[-8.53, -4.74]

*Note.* N = 729.  $R^2 = .06$ ,  $F = 47.61$ ,  $p = .001$ . \*p < .05. \*\*p < .01.

A backward stepwise linear regression analysis (table 3) was conducted to identify the possible predictors of mental well-being out of several candidate variables namely engagement, desire/savouring, positive emotions, pleasure preservation, binge watching, dependency and loss of control. The stepwise selection process resulted in a final model consisting a single predictor variable that is loss of control. This model was statistically significant with  $R^2 = .06$ ,  $F = 47.61$ ,  $p < .001$ . The adjusted R-square of .06, indicates that 6% of the variance in mental well-being was explained by problematic binge watching. The negative coefficient indicates that as the loss of control over binge watching increases, mental well-being of the user decreases.

**Table 5***Gender differences on binge watching and mental well-being*

Variables	Males		Females		t (727)	p
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Engagement	2.26	0.55	2.12	0.47	3.18**	0.00
Desire/Savouring	2.59	0.61	2.51	0.53	1.76	0.08
Pleasure Preservation	2.27	0.69	2.14	0.59	2.59*	0.01
Positive Emotion	2.57	0.56	2.54	0.49	0.85	0.39
Binge Watching	2.22	0.58	2.14	0.51	1.79	0.07
Dependency	2.12	0.58	2.06	0.52	1.36	0.17
Loss of Control	2.11	0.55	2.06	0.47	1.31	0.19
Mental well-being	43.36	14.24	40.89	13.56	2.27*	0.02

*Note.* Results of t tests for Males (n = 474) and Females (n = 255) are shown. \*p < .05. \*\*p < .01.

The gender differences on binge watching and mental well-being were also examined using t-test (table 5). The results indicated that males and females do not significantly differ from each other on binge watching behaviour except for dimensions engagement and pleasure preservation. Males (M= 2.26, SD = 0.55) reported greater level of involvement in binge watching rather than females (M = 2.12, SD = 0.47) and males (M = 2.27, SD = 0.69) scored notably higher on the pleasure preservation dimension compared to females (M = 2.14, SD = 0.59). Further analysis revealed a significant difference between males and females regarding mental well-being, with males (M = 43.36, SD = 14.24) reporting higher levels compared to females (M = 40.89, SD = 13.56).

## 5. Discussion

The prime purpose of this research was to explore the relationship between binge watching and mental well-being among emerging adults and the findings revealed that binge watching is negatively associated with user's well-being. Mental well-being and its three dimensions (emotional, social and psychological) were found to be negatively related to the

engagement dimension of binge watching, although the correlation between social well-being and engagement dimension was not significant. This could be explained with the help of perceived exposure corollary (Eveland & McLeod, 1999; Tsafati & Cohen, 2012), which suggests that increased media exposure corresponds to a heightened media impact. In other words, excessive indulgence in binge watching results to more negative consequences such as loss of self-control, goal conflicts and neglect of social activities thereby reducing emotional, psychological and social well-being (Anozie, 2020). Raza et al. (2021) also reported that extensive binge watching is associated with mental health symptoms such as stress, loneliness, depression, insomnia and anxiety. The desire savouring and pleasure preservation dimensions of binge watching were also negatively associated with mental well-being and its dimensions. Flayelle et al. (2019) indicate that individuals do pleasure preservation in order to enhance their immersion and thereby enjoyment level. Due to this high level of immersion, viewer could lose self-control and end up spending more time binge watching than intended and this uncontrolled binge watching could further lead to reduction in emotional and psychological well-being (Starosta & Izydorczyk, 2020). Pleasure preservation involves the use of the strategies such as doing binge watching in solitude and this could negatively affect the social well-being, as in this context binge watching could not be viewed as social activity. Rubenking et al. (2018) similarly found that individuals may neglect social activities and reduce their social interactions to indulge in binge-watching, potentially compromising their social relationships. Further, positive emotion dimension of binge watching was also negatively related to emotional, psychological and social well-being. It could mean that although the user can derive emotional benefits such as situational pleasure and happiness from binge watching but even in unproblematic form, binge watching can lead to negative consequences (Hoffmann, 2019). Similarly, previous studies also showed that relaxation feelings that viewers experienced during the session often ended shortly after the series concluded and got substituted with the feelings of guilt, regret, nervousness and anxiety (Kubey & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002; Dandamudi & Sathiyaseelan, 2018). These results could also be attributed to the possibility that binge-watching can be utilized as a maladaptive coping strategy to escape from one's reality, which in turn could negatively impact the mental well-being (Panda & Pandey, 2017; Starosta & Izydorczyk, 2020). Flayelle et al. (2019) reported that positive correlations exist between the dimensions of binge watching (engagement, desire-savouring, positive emotion and pleasure preservation) and coping-escapism motives.

Similarly, it was also reported that all the dimensions of binge watching were positively associated with negative affect (sadness, guilt).

Mental well-being, including its emotional, social, and psychological dimensions, exhibited a negative correlation with binge-watching behavior, dependency on binge-watching, and loss of control related to binge-watching. In other words, excessive binge watching and difficulty abstaining from watching TV series leads to poor well-being. The uncontrolled binge watching give rise to feelings of guilt as viewers think they have wasted their precious time. It also leads to personal goal conflicts as one binge watches at cost of giving up other goals and responsibilities (Granow et al., 2018). Experiencing guilt immediately after media use could diminish the pleasure obtained (Reinecke et al., 2014) and persistent goal conflicts, wherein important goals are consistently neglected, can reduce the life satisfaction (Hofmann et al., 2014; Panek, 2014), thereby leading to poor emotional well-being. The binge watching can trigger feelings of regret when it is done to procrastinate important tasks (Anozie, 2020; Flayelle et al., 2017). The feelings of regret and guilt could lead to negative self-appraisals thereby causing decline in psychological well-being (Reinecke et al., 2014). The excessive binge watching could come at the cost of decreased social activities. In other words, viewers spend more time in front of screens watching their favourite programs rather than spending time with their family and friends and this in turn leads to poor social well-being (Feeney, 2014; Pierce-Grove, 2016).

The current study also revealed that binge watching, particularly the loss of control dimension of BWESQ, is the strong predictor of decreased mental well-being in the viewers. Thus, not being able to control binge watching behaviour may result in lower level of well-being. If people are unable to manage their binge-watching tendencies, they may struggle to finish their daily duties, may ignore their important tasks for school or work and may also feel regret or guilt after extended viewing sessions. These factors combined together could lead to decrease in their overall well-being. Recent findings are in line with earlier studies, such as those by Boursier et al. (2021), which indicate that increased engagement in binge watching is linked to anxiety, escapism and avoidance; Flayelle et al. (2020), which show that binge-watching behaviors are associated with self-reported unhappiness and psychological issues; and Anozie (2020), which suggests that higher levels of binge watching are tied to negative emotions, while lower levels are connected to positive emotions. Additional evidence supports

the idea that binge watching is a leisurely activity, but it may have negative effects on well-being, Dhanuka and Bohra (2019) found that binge watching can have adverse social and psychological consequences for young people while Ahmed (2017) discovered a link between binge watching and higher levels of depression.

The results further showed significant gender differences on engagement and pleasure preservation dimensions of binge watching, where males showed greater involvement in binge watching and deployed more strategies to enhance their pleasure related to watching TV series as compared to females. Additionally, significant gender differences were also found with respect to mental well-being variable where males reported higher mental well-being as compared to females. These results are in concordance with the previous research. Research by Asmael (2018) reported that men may engage in binge-watching more frequently per week but with fewer episodes per session. Moreover, numerous studies indicate that being male increases the risk of developing internet addiction disorder such as online gaming (Mari et al., 2023; Pan et al., 2020; Xin et al., 2018). Mahemei and Palamattathil (2022) in their study on Indian sample also discovered female participants with exhibited lower mean scores than male participants across all six dimensions of psychological well-being: self-acceptance, autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, and positive relations with others. Gomez-Baya et al. (2018) also found that women tend to report a lower level of psychological well-being compared to men.

## **6. Conclusion**

The results of this study revealed that binge watching in both non problematic as well as problematic form can have adverse effect on the mental health of the users. Furthermore, there are differences between males and females in terms of their level of involvement in binge watching and their overall mental well-being. This study contributes to the existing literature by revealing that emotional benefits drawn from binge watching could be diminished when it is done in excessive amount. It also sheds light on the fact that binge watching could be a gender-related phenomenon. In spite of these advantages, there are certain constraints in the present study. The research utilized a cross-sectional design and gathered data through surveys, making it prone to the inherent drawbacks of both survey methods and cross-sectional studies. These limitations could be addressed through future studies. Future research could employ

longitudinal approach with more diverse sample for profound understanding of binge watching phenomenon and to reduce the constraints of generalizability. Future studies should also utilize qualitative methods to gain deeper insights into the psychological consequences of binge watching behaviour. Furthermore, this research also sets the stage for future studies to examine binge watching behavior on a continuum from recreational to addictive, and to explore how it impacts viewers' mental health even when not considered problematic.

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### **ORCID**

Amrit Kaur Hans – <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-5114-5277>

Harprit Kaur - <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8068-9084>

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