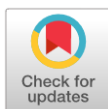


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Psychological Impact of Planned and Unplanned Binge Watching among Netflix Users in Lahore

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Abstract

Following the digital progress and the availability of online streaming services, binge-watching (in the literature often defined as watching multiple episodes of a TV series in one session) has become a popular viewing pattern. Concerns about possible negative and positive psychological consequences of this behaviour have arisen. Based on previous phenomenological investigation of binge-watching, it can be a planned or unplanned behavior. The present study analyzed positive and negative psychological impact of planned and unplanned binge-watching in terms of four psychological variables: depression, happiness, relaxation and stress. Additionally, the study has also specified motivational drives of planned and unplanned binge-watching. Data was collected from 400 students of 5 universities of Lahore: University of the Punjab, Lahore University of Management Sciences, University of Central Punjab, University of South Asia and University of Management and Technology. Result shows that planned and unplanned binge-watching have different psychological impact on viewers and, both behaviors have different motivations drives.

Keywords: depression, happiness, motivational derives, planned binge-watching, psychological impact, relaxation, stress, unplanned binge-watching

Introduction

Digital technology innovations encourage new methods of watching television; viewers are no longer constrained to one screen, where certain material can only be accessed during specific time slots. Instead, individuals can binge watch television shows and drama series whenever and wherever they like, which is known as binge-watching (Cook, 2014). Binge-watching is a relatively new behavioural phenomenon, which is described as watching a series of episodes in a row or for several hours (Cheng et al.,

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[2012](#); Mcnamara, [2012](#); Rubenking & Bracken, [2018](#)). Scholars differ on how to define binge-watching. Starosta and Izydorczyk (2020) defined binge-watching as watching between two and six episodes of a TV show in one sitting. Pittman and Sheehan ([2015](#)) defined binge-watching phenomenon as consuming two or more episodes of the same series in one sitting. An online streaming platform, Netflix, surveyed to define binge-viewing; respondents described binge-watching as watching 2 to 6 episodes of the same TV show or drama series in a row.

As a result of the introduction of several on-demand streaming services, this behavior began to acquire popularity, such as Netflix, Hulu, HBO GO, Amazon Prime, Disney+, and Apple TV. Viewers have multiple options for content with these conveniently available streaming services since they have access to a variety of content, and they can binge-watch whatever they want (Winland, [2015](#)). Several studies have found that persons aged 18 to 39 are more prone than older adults to participate in binge-watching activity (Chang, [2021](#)). The personal possession of gadgets such as laptops, smartphones, and tablets has made binge-viewing television shows, series, and movies easier than ever before (Walton-Pattison et al., [2018](#)). Binge-viewing, on the other hand, existed earlier and was defined as watching many episodes in a row on VHS, DVD, DVR (digital video recorder) or video on demand (Jenner, [2017](#)).

Online streaming services such as Netflix have introduced new methods for viewers to consume TV shows, allowing them to pick from a large range of diversified content, they can watch as many episodes of TV series as they like. Furthermore, a TV show's entire season is available at once. The viewer does not have to wait a week for the following episode, as it is a typical characteristic of traditional television (Flayell et al, [2020](#)).

Binge-watching has certainly become the most popular and exciting way for today's audience to consume media content, such as TV shows and drama series (Baker, [2017](#)). Online streaming platforms allow viewers to schedule their binge-watching according to their convenience (Flayelle et al, [2017](#)). Binge-watching can be a planned or unplanned activity (Pittman & Sheehan, [2015](#); Riddle et al, [2018](#); Clarke, [2019](#)).

Statement of the Problem

In this digital era where viewers are free to watch television shows and drama series wherever and whenever they want by using online streaming

platforms, viewers to experience positive or negative consequences of binge-watching (Flayelle et al, [2020](#)). Previous findings have shown that media entertainment can affect users both positively and negatively (Reinecke & Oliver, [2016](#)). After binge-watching, viewers experienced relaxation and pleasure (Medina, [2017](#)). Physical fatigue and depression can occur due to binge-watching (Sussman & Moran, [2013](#)). Viewers felt more delighted and stress-free after binge-watching (Jacob, [2017](#)). Users experienced depression, loneliness, and a loss of control after binge-watching on online streaming platforms. (Tukachinsky & Eyal, [2018](#)). Psychological consequences of binge-watching: viewers experience happiness and relaxation after binge-watching. (Troles, [2019](#)).

Despite the fact that previous studies have begun to define binge-watching (watching more than two episodes of the same drama series or TV show in a single sitting) and identify associated motivational factors (relaxation, pleasure, social engagement, escape from reality, passing time, emotional enhancement, feeling of completion, improved viewing experience perceived control) (Pittman & Sheehan, [2015](#); Sung et al., [2018](#), Walton-Pattison et al., [2018](#); Shim & Kim [2018](#); Panda & Pandey 2017; Steiner & Xu [2020](#); Flayelle et al, [2019](#); Starosta et al, [2020](#)), little is known about the psychological impact of planned and unplanned binge watching, and what motivates people to engage in planned or unplanned binge watching. In Pakistan most of the studies conducted on binge watching have been more focused around the motivational aspects of binge watching. Only a few studies have discussed about psychological impact, but they concentrated more on the negative outcomes of binge-watching behavior.

This study filled the lacuna of previous literature by analyzing the idea of planned and unplanned binge watching to examine both the positive and negative psychological impact on Netflix users. The aim of the study is to expand the understanding of binge-watching in the context of psychological influence of planned and unplanned binge watching and to examine how it has different psychological impact on users. Furthermore, this study also specifies motivations for planned and unplanned binge watching.

Rationale of the Study

Binge-watching has certainly become the most popular and entertaining way for today's audience to consume media content. Regardless of the prevalence of binge watching, there is continuous debate concerning the

behavior, and the conflicting results of prior studies reflect its complexities (Pittman & Steiner, [2021](#)). Although the phenomena have been famous since 2013, research on the psychological impact of planned and unplanned binge-watching is still inadequate. Although binge watching and psychological impact and motivational drives behind that behavior have been studied before, but not in the context of planned and unplanned binge-watching. To advance binge-watching research, it is compulsory to distinguish between the psychological impact of planned and unplanned binge-watching, and also to specify motivations for planned and unplanned binge-watching behavior.

Significance of the Study

Most of the studies conducted on the binge watching have been focused on the motivational factors behind it, and to some extent about the negative impact of binge watching. By adding distinction to binge watching discourse, this research will advance the understanding of the psychological impact, in the form of happiness, depression, relaxation, and stress, associated with increasingly popular activity by implying the idea of planned and unplanned binge watching. This study also specifies motivations for planned and unplanned binge watching. This study aims to raise awareness about healthy binge-watching by looking for factors that can create a better viewing experience, which may be useful in assisting viewers to plan and execute a binge-watching strategy; even if it means encouraging people to watch fewer television episodes in a row.

Research Objectives

- To examine the psychological impact of planned and unplanned binge watching among Netflix users in Lahore.
- To analyze the impact of planned binge watching on user happiness and relaxation.
- To investigate the association between unplanned binge-watching stress and depression in users.
- To specify the motivations behind planned and unplanned binge-watching practice.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the psychological consequences of planned and unplanned binge-watching on users?

RQ: How does planned and unplanned binge-watching affect user feelings?

RQ2: What factors or motivations contribute to planned binge-watching?

RQ3: What factors or motivations contribute to unplanned binge-watching?

Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant difference between planned/unplanned binge-watching and the degree of happiness.

H2: There is a significant difference between planned/unplanned binge-watching and the degree of relaxation.

H3: There is a significant difference between planned/unplanned binge-watching and the degree of depression.

H4: There is a significant difference between planned/unplanned binge-watching and the degree of stress.

H5: There is a significant difference between planned and unplanned binge-watching motivations.

Scope

This study majorly focuses on the psychological impact of planned and unplanned binge-watching, moreover, the motivational drives behind both these practices. However, binge-watching behavior has both positive and negative psychological impact on viewers. To examine the psychological impact of planned and unplanned binge-watching and to specify the motivations behind it, data was collected from 400 university students. Both male and female university students ranging from 18 to 36 years of age have been sampled for online and physical survey.

Literature Review

Binge-Watching Phenomenon

Devasagayam ([2014](#)) stated that binge watching of media content is not wholly a new practice, and the word of bingeing was most commonly

associated with the binge-eating or binge-drinking which is defined as a quick and consecutive consumption of a great number of substances in a while until 2012. However, in 2013 media-binging behavior started getting popular after the appearance of online streaming platforms such as, Netflix, Amazon prime and Hulu etc. After that television audience developed the new habit of consuming media content consecutively and this practice is now known as binge-watching. Likewise, Steiner (2014) stated that the term binge-watching got so popular that even Oxford dictionaries labelled it as the trendiest word of 2013. Additionally, binge-watching is a long tradition of television technology to consume media content. A decade ago, people used different medium for binge watching, such as VCRs and DVD players, but after the development of online streaming sites such as Netflix, amazon prime and Hulu, they replaced the VCRs and DVD and people switched to these sites for binge watching which makes these platforms major sources for binge-watching (Horeck et al, 2018).

Despite the omnipresence of binge watching, scholars are unsure about how to describe the behavior of binge-watching (Baker, 2017). Similarly, Flayelle et al. (2017) mentioned in their study that binge watching is a behavior of seeing several episodes of a drama series one after the another in a single sitting anytime, anyplace, on internet connected devices and the findings of the study also reveal that, binge watching has become a new practice for television audiences to enjoy drama series by using streaming platforms, and this practice is more popular among young audiences. Likewise, Boudali et al. (2017) stated that after the advent of on demand viewing and online streaming services a new behavioral phenomenon has been evolved which is binge-watching, a behavior of consuming more than 2 episodes of a drama series consecutively. Furthermore, because of the contradiction about the description of binge-watching phenomenon, Netflix itself conducted a survey to provide a definition of binge watching. On this basis, Netflix defines binge watching behavior as viewing two to six episodes of the same series in a single sitting (Davis, 2016). Likewise, Jenner (2018) defined binge watching as viewing more than two episodes of the same series in a single session. Besides, De Feijter et al. (2016) describes binge-watching as a behavior of consecutively watching a drama series by using online streaming services on their preferred devices such as laptops, mobile phones, and tablets. Moreover, the study also stated binge watching as becoming a new normal because of the effortless access to media content including drama series, television shows and movies,

available to viewers regardless of time and place. Some earlier studies also define binge watching on the basis of time duration. Likewise, McNamara (2012) described binge watching as viewing more than three episodes, with each episode spanning over an hour, of the same series in a single session. Correspondingly, Perks (2014) stated that binge watching is a behavior of consecutively viewing the same drama series for 2 to 4 hours. Additionally, Grandinetti (2017) defines binge watching as watching multiple episodes consecutively for hours of the same series with the intention to complete the series speedily. Furthermore, some research study adopted an approach to define binge watching from the viewers' perspective. Vaterlaus et al. (2019) conducted a study to find out how the audience of an online streaming platform (Netflix) conceptualized the term of binge-watching and the study concluded that binge-watching can be defined as watching a drama series episodes or movies consecutively for hours without involving any other activity or taking a break. Binge-watching is a behavior of consuming media content continuously.

Relatedly, the term binge-watching is familiar in popular media and is the new behavior of viewing drama series or television series using online streaming services, providing a wide range of media content. Another study conceptualized the term of binge-watching on the basis of actual viewers' perspectives, including viewing drama content consecutively for more than three to four hours, also stating that the behavior of binge watching is more common among the youth (Rubenking & Bracken, 2018). Additionally, Camilleri and Falzon (2021) asserted that viewers believed that online streaming platforms facilitate them with unique features and traditional television is unable to facilitate them with those features, so they define binge watching specifically from the perspective of online streaming platforms, portability, and ads free features.

Planned Binge Watching and Unplanned Binge Watching

According to the earlier studies, this popular practice of binge-watching can be either a planned or unplanned behavior. As, Flayelle et al. (2017) revealed that binge-watching online streaming platforms allows users to organize their consumption, and viewers plan their consumption according to their suitability. Similarly, Clarke (2019) also observed that binge-watching behavior can be a planned or unplanned activity. Relatedly, Riddle et al. (2018) asserted that media audience engaged in two types of binge-watching behavior; one is planned, when the viewers intentionally watch

drama series, and the other one is unplanned binge watching when viewers engage in binge watching unintentionally.

Motivations Behind the Binge Watching Behavior

Most of the previous research studies employed uses of gratification approach to explore the motivations of binge watching. Conlin et al. (2016) found that the distress of missing out encourage young viewers to watch particular series which is getting popular among their social circle and after watching that series they take part in social conversation to avoid the feeling of missing out. Conversely, Shim and Kim's (2018) study identified that enjoyment, recommendation by others, efficiency, fandom and perceived control are the key motivations for viewers to binge-watch. The study also signifies three motivations as enjoyment, efficiency and perceived control for the hasty and consecutive consumption of media.

Furthermore, Panda and Pandey (2017) recognized the motivation of binge-watching to include social engagement, escape from reality, and convenience, allowing viewers to spend more time on binge watching by using online streaming services. Moreover, viewers are more likely to invest time in binge-watching if they are adversely gratified to avoid the feeling of guilty pleasure, and the study also revealed that social engagement played a key role in binge watching behavior. Viewers binge watch to participate in a discussion with their social groups to prevent feeling ignored or excluded. Through social engagement, viewers received suggestions and feedback about movies, tv shows and drama series which influence their binge-watching behavior.

Additionally, Sung et al. (2018) identified motivations of binge watching to be entertainment and passing time. Moreover, the study also inspected differences in motivations; passing time is the motivation for only those viewers who spend more time in binge watching. However, Rubenking et al. (2018) analyzed motivations that contribute to individuals' binge-watching behavior including anticipation, management of moods and excitement, social goal, procrastination, and escapism. Anticipation of what was coming afterward influenced binge watching, and anticipation is facilitated by the dramatic and suspenseful content. Technology also facilitates anticipation by giving the viewers the option to watch more episodes. Results of the study revealed that the combination of the story plotting, music effects, and acting in media content creates a strong impact

on emotions, and that emotional impact keeps the audience engaged.

Correspondingly, Castro et al. (2021) observed motivations of binge watching to include relaxation, boredom relief and escapism. Relaxation and escapism are the motivations for viewers who binge watch at the end of the day. Moreover, boredom relief is the motivation for viewers who take a break between their tasks. Likewise, Flayelle et al. (2019) assessed that the motivational aspects that contribute to binge watching include emotional enhancement, social, enrichment, and coping escapism. Binge watching for escapism is another experience, since it allows viewers to forget about their current situation as they are so engaged with the drama series' story and characters, they only think about them.

Furthermore, Steiner and Xu (2020) found that viewers have catching up (viewers suitably organize entertainment by scheduling binge watching), relaxation, cultural inclusion (watching to fit in social circles and take part in online discourse about the shows), improved viewing experience (watching to experience the multiplicity of content and quality) and sense of completion (to get satisfaction after watching a whole show) motivations for binge watching the study also stated that viewers usually plan their binge watching to avoid any kind of interruption in between viewing drama series. Conversely, Wagner (2016) discovered that background noise for multitasking, avoiding spoilers, maximizing social currency, and escapism are the motivations for binge watching. Alike, viewers binge watch to cope with their feeling of loneliness and escapism because binge watching on online streaming platforms provides them with a space to fulfil their escapism need and permits them to connect with fictitious characters to manage their loneliness (Gabbiadini et al. 2021). Correspondingly, Nanda and Banerjee (2020) conceptualized binge-watching needs by applying the lens of uses of gratifications. The research study concluded that flow, escape from reality, entertainment, and killing time are the motivations of binge-watching behavior.

Mixed Outcomes of Binge-Watching

Contradicting findings of earlier studies expose the complexity of binge watching. As, Rubin (2009) stated that after watching television series, viewers experienced relaxation and pleasure. Relatedly, Feeney (2014) argued that people used binge watching as a reward after completing their work tasks for relaxation purposes. As opposed to that, Sussman & Moran

(2013) noted that binge watching may have a detrimental impact on academic performance, sleep, physical wellbeing, and interpersonal relationships. Similarly, according to Steins-Loeber et al (2020), after consecutive binge-watching, people experienced sleep fatigue, goals conflict, and social isolation.

Conversely, Granow et al. (2018) discovered that binge watching has both positive and negative effects on the viewers. Online streaming platforms offer viewers liberty to gratify their entertainment needs instantly as viewers have the access to watch anything, anywhere on their internet connected devices which influences their well-being positively. However, endlessly watching causes feelings of guilt, resulting in a conflict between entertainment goals and other goals. Similarly, Anozie (2020) examined that people who binge-watched limitlessly experienced undesirable emotions such as guilt, dependency and loss of control, and people who spend less time in binge watching experienced positive feelings such as immediate satisfaction, pleasure, and relaxation. Likewise, Petersen (2016) stated that one of the negative consequences of binge watching is limiting the social contact and activities. Viewers who spend unlimited time in binge watching detach themselves from social gatherings.

Correspondingly, Ahmed (2017) stated that binge-watching is a new pattern of viewing media content among youth and this behavior is the outcome of being reliant on new media and personal devices linked to the internet. The findings of the study revealed that depressed and lonely viewers spend more time binge watching and escaping from the reality. Additionally, Starosta et al. (2020) evaluated that viewers who binge watch for a long time usually want to cope with their feelings of loneliness and escape. Besides, Ort et al. (2021) investigated that viewers who binge watch because of escapism and loneliness, are more likely to experience undesirable emotions later. Moreover, Sun and Chang (2021) discovered that binge watching behavior boosted social interaction anxiety (refers to the suffering felt while interacting with people in social sitting), loneliness and depression. Relatedly, Tukachinsky and Eyal (2018) determined that binge-watching is negatively related to depression, loneliness and a lack of self-control. Similarly, Walton-Pattison et al. (2018) stated that binge watching causes feelings of regret as viewers decide to carry on binge watching although they realize there are other important tasks to be completed. In contrast, Jacob (2017) analyzed that viewers felt more

delighted and stress-free after binge watching which reveals that the behavior of binge watching is negatively linked to depression.

Synthesis of Literature Review and Research Gap

Previous studies explored motivations for binge-watching and examined the psychological impact of binge-watching by employing uses of gratification framework. This has enlightened researchers of the present study regarding why people engaged in binge-watching by using online streaming platforms and how it affects viewers both positively and negatively. The gap identified in earlier studies is the absence of an analysis of the psychological impact of planned and unplanned binge-watching. Moreover, the previous literature has not specified motivations behind binge-watching by separating planned and unplanned binge-watching. For this purpose, this study contributes through analyzing the impact of planned and unplanned binge-watching.

Theoretical Framework

The relevant theory for the study is the Uses of Gratification. The Uses and Gratification Theory explain why viewers choose this online streaming platform (Netflix) specifically, and how it influences their psychological well-being. It can have both positive and negative psychological impact on viewers, depending on the pattern of viewing. Uses of gratifications theory has been recognized as a foundational theory since its principles are widely acknowledged and relevant to a variety of scenarios involving mediated communication such as, television, radio, newspaper and the internet (Ferguson & Perse [2000](#)). Furthermore, Elliot and Rosenberg ([1987](#)) stated that when a new technology enters the stage of mass communication, this theory has been used to analyse audiences' motives and decisions to employ a certain type of mediated communication tool. The present study has examined the motivations which lead the user to engage in planned and unplanned binge-watching behavior, and the psychological consequences of both practices through the conceptual framework of uses of gratification theory. This theoretical framework will enable the researcher to examine how planned and unplanned binge-watching has different psychological impact on viewers. The framework will also help to specify the motivations behind planned and unplanned binge-watching.

Research Methodology

This study uses a quantitative approach in the form of a survey to collect

information on the binge-watching behaviors of university students and the psychological effects they may have. A survey aims to gather numerical insights into the attitudes, beliefs, or opinions of the respondents through a systematic approach to data collection using a questionnaire that is known for efficiency, uniformity, and ease of leaving participants less intimidated than other approaches (Marshall, [2005](#)). The survey population comprised of the student body of age group 18 to 36, belonging to five institutions including the University of the Punjab, Lahore University of Management Sciences, University of Central Punjab, University of South Asia, and University of Management and Technology. Selection was carried out based on the HEC rankings. For collecting the data, a simple random sampling technique was used. 400 out of 585 participants completed the online and physical surveys. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 26 was used to conduct the statistical analysis. The final results are outlined in the table below. Chi-square tests were run to check for differences on psychological effects of planned versus unplanned binge-watching regarding feelings of happiness, relaxation, depression, and stress.

Results

H1: There is a significant difference between planned/unplanned binge-watching and the degree of happiness. It is predicted that there is a different degree of happiness experienced by binge watchers after planned and unplanned binge-watching.

Table 1

Chi-Square Test Results for Differences in Happiness After Planned and Unplanned Binge-Watching

	Unplanned binge-watching and happiness	Planned binge-watching and happiness
Chi-Square	3230.350a	1824.320b
df	9	5
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000

H2: There is a significant difference between planned/unplanned binge-watching and the degree of relaxation. It is predicted that there is a different degree of relaxation experienced by binge watchers after planned and unplanned binge-watching.

Table 2

Chi-Square Test Results for Differences in Relaxation After Planned and Unplanned Binge-Watching

	Planned binge-watching and relaxation	Unplanned binge- watching and relaxation
Chi-Square	2519.920a	3174.000b
df	7	9
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000

H3: There is a significant difference between planned/unplanned binge-watching and the degree of depression. It is predicted that there is a different degree of depression experienced by binge watchers after planned and unplanned binge-watching.

Table 3

Chi-Square Test Results for Differences in Depression After Planned and Unplanned Binge-Watching

	Unplanned binge- watching and depression	Planned binge-watching and depression
Chi-Square	3306.600a	2235.080b
df	9	6
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000

H4: There is a significant difference between planned/unplanned binge-watching and the degree of stress. It is predicted that there is a different degree of stress experienced by binge watchers after planned and unplanned binge-watching.

Table 4

Chi-Square Test Results for Differences in Stress After Planned and Unplanned Binge-Watching

	Unplanned binge- watching and stress	Planned binge-watching and stress
Chi-Square	3325.550a	2235.010b
df	9	6
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000

H5: There is a significant difference between planned and unplanned binge-watching motivations. It is predicted that viewers have different motivations to engage in planned and unplanned binge-watching.

Table 5

Frequency Distribution of Motivations for Planned Binge-Watching

Valid	Frequency	Valid percent
Escape from reality	22	5.5
Relaxation	384	96.0
Boredom relief	41	10.2
Feelings of completion	311	77.7
Improved viewing experience	304	76.0
Fear of missing out	31	7.75
Time pass	84	21.0
Enjoyment	388	97.0
Social engagement	59	14.8

The findings show that there is a significant difference between planned and unplanned binge-watching motivations. 96.0% ($n=384$) reported relaxation as a motivational drive behind planned binge-watching, 77.7% ($n=311$) respondents reported feelings of completion, 76.0% ($n=304$) respondents reported improved viewing experience, 97.8% ($n=388$) respondents reported enjoyment as a motivational drive for planned binge watching, 5.5% ($n=22$) respondents reported escape from reality, 10.2% ($n=41$) respondents reported boredom relief, 7.75% ($n=31$) reported fear of missing out, 21.0% ($n=84$) reported time-pass, and 14.8% ($n=59$) reported social engagement as a motivation for planned binge-watching.

Table 6

Frequency Distribution of Motivations for Unplanned Binge-Watching

Valid	Frequency	Valid percent
Escape from reality	294	73.5
Relaxation	113	28.2
Boredom relief	369	92.2
Feelings of completion	42	10.5
Improved viewing experience	44	11.0
Fear of missing out	288	72.0
Time pass	349	87.2

Enjoyment	381	95.2
Social engagement	169	42.3

The result shows that there is a significant difference between planned and unplanned binge-watching motivations. 73.5%($n=294$) respondents reported escape from reality as a motivation for unplanned binge-watching, 28.2%($n=133$) respondents reported relaxation, 92.2%($n=369$) reported boredom relief, 10.5%($n=42$) respondents reported feelings of completion, 11.0%($n=44$) respondents reported improved viewing experience, 72.0%($n=288$) respondents reported fear of missing out, 87.2%($n=349$) respondents reported time-pass, 95.2%($n=381$) respondents reported enjoyment and 42.3%($n=169$) reported social engagement as a motivation to engage in unplanned binge-watching.

Discussion

Analysis of the behavior of planned and unplanned binge-watching is necessary due to the rising popularity of binge-watching. Binge watching is a complicated phenomenon that can have both positive and negative consequences. This study evaluated the psychological impact of both planned and unplanned binge-watching behavior to better understand the consequences associated with binge-watching. The habit of watching television has long been studied, but with more attention being paid to binge-watching, this research provided more detail on the planned and unplanned practices of binge-watching behavior. The purpose of this study was to get beyond binge-watching as a singular concept by providing the deeper insight about two practices of binge-watching which include planned/unplanned binge-watching and psychological outcomes associated with both behaviors. Furthermore, the study aimed to specify motivational drives behind planned/unplanned binge-watching. Taking into consideration the results of the surveys that university students completed both online and in person, this research examined the psychological impact of planned/unplanned binge-watching by focusing on the psychological differences in terms of the four variables: happiness, relaxation, depression, and stress. This study provided significant findings regarding the psychological impact of planned and unplanned binge-watching. Moreover, the motivational factors of planned and unplanned binge-watching were also the subject of the current study, which produced significant findings.

Findings of the demographic analysis indicate that 55.8% of the sample were male, majority of the respondents belonged to the 18-22 age group and 70.0% participants were undergraduates. This sample appears to be an interesting demographic for further examination, as previous studies have shown that streaming platforms like Netflix are predominantly used by younger people under the age of 25, and that undergraduates are the primary population for binge-watching (Riddle et al., [2018](#); Starosta et al., [2020](#)). Particularly consistent with findings from earlier studies (Panda & Pandey, [2017](#); Walton-Pattison et al., [2018](#); Pittman & Sheehan, [2015](#)), the results of binge-watching analysis revealed that the majority of respondents watch 2-4 episodes in a single session of binge-watching. Moreover, they prefer smartphones and laptops for binge-watching, and they like to binge-watch at home, which is notably consistent with the findings of a prior study (Starosta et al., [2020](#)). The most popular devices for binge-watching are laptops and mobile phones. Moreover, technology advancements have made binge-viewing on these types of devices more accessible than the traditional method of watching television shows. Both the place and the number of episodes seen are up to the individual.

Results showed that respondents engaged in both planned and unplanned binge-watching. This finding is in accordance with previously published research on both planned and unplanned binge-watching that the practice can be a planned or unplanned activity (Rubenking et al., [2018](#); Riddle et al., 2018). Furthermore, findings also indicate that both planned and unplanned binge-watching sessions are more likely to take place in the evening and at night. Both positive and negative outcomes of binge-watching have been documented in the literature. The most prominent outcomes of binge-watching reported by binge-watchers are depression stress, happiness, and relaxation. (Anozie, [2020](#); Gangadharbatla et al., [2019](#); Granow et al., [2018](#); Rubin, [2009](#); Tukachinsky & Eyal, 2018; Raza et al, [2021](#); Troles, 2019; Medina, [2017](#)). The results of the present study indicated that planned binge-watching and unplanned binge-watching play different roles when it comes to the psychological impact of binge-watching. Results showed that planned binge-watching is associated with positive psychological outcomes whereas unplanned binge-watching is associated with negative psychological outcomes. Results indicated that when viewers binge-watch without planning or forethought, those unplanned binges are more likely to result in undesirable consequences, such as depression and stress. Moreover, planning is linked to positive

outcomes of binge-watching such as happiness and relaxation, when viewers schedule binge-watching sessions according to their suitability. This is consistent with the idea that binge-watching is a way for people to limit their television viewing with modern technology that wasn't available in the 20th century (Steiner, [2021](#)). Modern digital streaming platforms, on the other hand, enhance these features of management, offering binge-watchers in the modern era a special ability to organize their binge-watching sessions. One of the objectives of the study was to specify the motivations for planned and unplanned binge-watching. Results disclosed that there is significant difference between motivational drives of planned and unplanned binge-watching, including escape from reality, boredom relief, fear of missing out, time pass, and enjoyment., specifically for unplanned binge-watching. On the other hand, relaxation, feelings of completion, improved viewing experience and enjoyment are the motivations for binge-watchers who engage in planned binge-watching.

All the hypotheses of the study were accepted. The significant finding of the study is that viewers engage in both planned and unplanned binge-watching. Planned binge-watching is associated with positive psychological outcomes, and unplanned binge-watching is associated with negative psychological outcomes. Viewers who engage in binge-watching without planning are more likely to experience negative consequences such as depression and stress. Moreover, viewers who schedule their binge-watching session ahead of time, are more likely to experience positive outcomes such as, happiness and relaxation. Another significant finding of the study is the difference between the motivational drives of planned and unplanned binge-watching. Relaxation, feelings of completion, improved viewing experience, and enjoyment are the planned binge-watching motivations., whereas, escape from reality, boredom relief, fear of missing out, time pass and enjoyment are the unplanned binge-watching motivations. The finding of the study suggested that binge-watching can be a planned or planned activity, and both practices have different psychological impact on viewers. Furthermore, both behaviors are driven by different motivations, so, to comprehend the phenomenon of binge-watching, its motivations, and both negative and positive consequences should be studied separately in terms of planned and unplanned binge-watching.

Conclusion

The primary objective of the study was to examine the psychological impact of planned and unplanned binge-watching. Moreover, the second objective was to specify the motivations behind both planned and unplanned binge-watching behaviors. In this regard the study incorporated quantitative methodology. Data was collected through online and physical survey from university students of Lahore. The results of the study revealed that planned and unplanned binge-watching has different psychological impact on viewers. Planned binge-watching has more positive psychological impact on viewers, making them feel happier and more relaxed after planned binge-watching session. On the other hand, unplanned binge-watching has more negative impact on viewers, as they experience depression and stress after unplanned binge-watching. Furthermore, the findings of the study also revealed that binge-watchers have different motivational drives for planned and unplanned binge-watching. Relaxation, feelings of completion, improved viewing experience, and enjoyment are the planned binge-watching motivations. And escape from reality, boredom relief, fear of missing out, time pass, and enjoyment are the unplanned binge-watching motivations. This study provides a deeper understanding of psychological impact of binge-watching. This study provides significant information for expanding discussions regarding the psychological impacts of planned and unplanned binge-watching on university students and what motivates them to engage in planned or unplanned binge-watching.

Author Contribution

Javeria Naz contributed to conceptualization, methodology, data collection, literature review, original draft writing, and interpretation of findings. Fahad Anis supervised the study, provided methodological guidance, assisted in analysis and interpretation, and reviewed the manuscript. Hina Fatima contributed to referencing, formatting, proofreading, and journal submission compliance.

Conflict of Interest

The authors of the manuscript have no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

Data supporting the findings of this study will be made available by the corresponding author upon request.

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