



## Letter to the Editor

**Binge watching: An emerging manifestation of technology use**

Streaming series represents an everyday behavior for many individuals, leading to excessive or problematic involvement and adverse consequences in the form of addictive use for a subgroup of individuals. As substantial quality content is available on-demand for toddlers and children binge-watching habit begins for many when they are young. Television binge-watching is being understood as viewing multiple episodes of the same television series in the same sitting (Walton-Pattison et al., 2018). Whereas Davis (2016) defined it as watching two to six episodes of the same show in one sitting. But none of the definitions talk about the length of the episodes as they vary in their durations. The individuals who are watching the online or TV series perceive that they are just making a decision to watch another episode of the web series while mostly discounting the time duration and the impact on their social and occupational schedule. There has been an increase in preference for the over-the-top streaming service and video on demand across all age groups starting from adolescents to adults. It provides the user the possibility to watch any show at any given time, leading to binge-watching (accessing or watching various shows or episodes of a series). The practice of watching back to back TV shows over internet has become a common trend nowadays and online screen time is new platform for watching TV shows or online shows. The excessive online screen time is also getting maintained by various lucrative or low-cost offers available for viewing show series. The psychological variables of loneliness, depression and deficiency in self-regulation of emotions were positively related to binge watching. The most important factor to predict binge watching behavior among the above three factors was found to be self-regulation deficits (Sung et al., 2015). Excessive screen time is emerging as a significant and autonomous indicator of health. The present case approached the specialty center for management of technology addiction for management of excessive use of streaming series.

A 26-year-old man, currently nonfunctional now, started spending time on online streaming series for the last 12 months. Due to the availability of free time, to manage the stress for not having an employment as well as the family pressure to be occupationally active, the user started spending time on watching streaming series. As reported, it helped him to feel good. Gradually, time increased from 90 min to him spending 6 to 8 h per day. Each show used to last from 45 min to 60 min and he reported a feeling of well-being consequent to watching series. Excessive online watching was associated with a delay in the initiation of sleep and physical fatigue. Over a few weeks, binge watching became the first and foremost activity of the day. The user met the criteria for excessive use of technology in from of preoccupation with online series, loss of control over use, withdrawal (i.e. feeling distressed/irritable if not allowed watching), continuing use despite negative consequences (i.e. sleep disturbance, procrastination etc) and substantial decrease in social interaction amounting to dysfunctional social behavior.

The case interview also revealed use was related to enjoyment associated with watching back -to -back series without any commercial

advertisements. It also provided the topic of discussion with others or sometimes others also recommend them to watch a particular online show series. The other reasons associated with binge-watching behavior were feeling an emotional high wherein he felt higher intensity of positive emotions of elation, excitement or euphoria. It also served as a method of distraction from daily stressors of life, as a method to pass leisure time and overcome loneliness. In addition, loss of self-control over show series, easy accessibility and low cost for accessing the internet also contributed to binge watching.

The case report documents the binge-watching of show series for entertainment and its association with other characteristics of excessive internet use like as a method of distraction from daily stressors of life, feeling of wellbeing, loss of self-control, etc. It has been corroborated with studies available on its use as a leisure activity to stop thinking about the daily issues of life and it becomes a content of social interaction as well (Beggs and Elkins, 2010; Panda and Pandey, 2017). A similar case finding has been reported which suggests that excessive screen time can be due to online TV series as over time the pattern to access media has changed with mobile phone screens replacing TV screens for entertainment (Balhara et al., 2018). The characteristics of binge-watching of show series can be explained through the Triple-A model – of accessibility, affordability, and anonymity (Cooper et al., 1999) of online sexual activities. The presence of preoccupation with series, loss of control, withdrawal behaviors, continued use despite unpleasant consequences and socio-occupational dysfunction also implicate to view binge-watching from a symptom-based component model of addiction (Griffiths, 2005), though evidence has to evolve in this direction.

When the decision to watch multiple online TV episodes occurs, the curiosity and excitement supersede the pragmatic thinking of an individual, which leads to misjudgments in availability of time and its impact on their daily functioning. Thus, there is a need to explore the emerging phenomena of binge-watching of online TV series and movies among adolescents and young adults as this behavior can become disabling with uninterrupted or unlimited access to online screen time. There are indications for developing a phenomenological study of binge-watching, increasing awareness about making behavioral modifications while watching online TV series, to evolve healthy offline coping methods and alternative hobbies in order to consume online TV series in moderation.

**Ethic statement**

The paper has address the following headings:

- **Authorship of the paper:** Authors made a significant contribution to the conception, design, execution, or interpretation of the reported study.
- **Originality and plagiarism:** It was author original work and other

authors work has been appropriately cited or quoted.

- **Data access and retention:** I am willing to provide the raw data in connection with a paper for editorial review in case asked for.
- **Multiple, redundant or concurrent publication:** It has not been submitted else where for publication
- **Acknowledgement of sources:** Proper acknowledgment of funding agency mentioned
- **Disclosure and conflicts of interest:** it was mentioned
- **Fundamental errors in published works:** I would report to editor in case of any error
- **Reporting standards:** It was followed
- **Hazards and human or animal subjects:** Not applicable
- **Use of patient images or case details:** Institute ethics committee approval and informed consent was documented.

### Funding

All authors involved in this research communication do not have any financial and personal relationships with other people or organizations that could inappropriately influence (bias) their work.

### Declaration of Competing Interest

None.

### Acknowledgement

Department of Health Research, Indian council of Medical Research Delhi, grant awarded to Dr Manoj Kumar Sharma.

### References

Balhara, Y.P.L., Verma, K., Bhargava, R., 2018. Screen time and screen addiction: beyond

- gaming, social media and pornography– a case report. *Asian J. Psychol.* 35, 77–78.
- Beggs, B.A., Elkins, D.J., 2010. The influence of leisure motivation on leisure satisfaction. *LARNet: Cyber J. Appl. Leisure Recreat. Res* Retrieved from. <http://larnet.org/2010-02.html>.
- Cooper, A., Scherer, C.R., Boies, S.C., Gordon, B.L., 1999. Sexuality on the Internet: From sexual exploration to pathological expression. *Prof. Psychol. Res. Pract.* 30, 154–164.
- Davis, B.C., 2016. The netflix effect and defining binge-watching. In: Poster Session Presented at the Meeting of the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program. Virginia Commonwealth University, VA.
- Griffiths, M.D., 2005. A "components" model of addiction within a biopsychosocial framework. *J. Subst. Use* 10, 191–197.
- Sung, Y.H., Kang, E.Y., Lee, W., 2015. A bad habit for your health? An exploration of psychological factors for binge watching behavior. In: Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association 65th Annual Conference. Caribe Hilton, San Juan, Puerto Rico. Online. [http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p986102\\_index.html](http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p986102_index.html).
- Panda, Swati, Pandey, Satyendra C., 2017. Binge watching and college student's motivation and outcomes. *Young Consum.* 18, 425–438.
- Walton-Pattison, E., Dombrowski, S.U., Presseau, J., 2018. Just one more episode: frequency and theoretical correlates of television binge watching. *J. Health Psychol.* 23 (1), 17–24.

Manoj Sharma,

*E-mail address:* [shutclinic@gmail.com](mailto:shutclinic@gmail.com).

Manoj Kumar Sharma<sup>a</sup>, Nitin Anand<sup>b</sup>, Thamilselvan P. <sup>c</sup>, Suma N. <sup>d</sup>,  
Nisha John<sup>d</sup>, Maya Sahu<sup>e</sup>, Pranjali Chakraborty Thakur<sup>c</sup>,  
Happy Baglari<sup>c</sup>, Priya Singh<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Professor of Clinical Psychology, Service for Healthy Use of Technology (SHUT) Clinic, Department of Clinical Psychology, NIMHANS, Bangalore

<sup>b</sup> Associate Professor of Clinical Psychology, Department of Clinical Psychology, NIMHANS, Bangalore

<sup>c</sup> Research Scholar, Service for Healthy Use of Technology (SHUT) Clinic, Department of Clinical Psychology, NIMHANS, Bangalore

<sup>d</sup> Clinical Psychologist, Department of Clinical Psychology, NIMHANS, Bangalore

<sup>e</sup> Research Scholar, Department of Nursing, NIMHANS, Bangalore