

# Impact of Binge Watching on Mindfulness among Young Adults during Outbreak of Pandemic

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## ABSTRACT

**B**inge watching has gained popularity in recent years as a source of pleasure and entertainment which ultimately ends up as a practice of watching frequent episodes of a television show or a series for a longer duration in a single setting without a break. Mindfulness has been studied across various psychological variables as a buffer technique. The objective of the research was to examine the association between Binge Watching Behavior and Mindfulness among young adults during the phase of pandemic. The study sample consisted of young adults belonging to the age group of 18 to 25 years, who were residents of India. The standardized tools used for the method of data collection are Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) and Binge-Watching Engagement and Symptoms Questionnaire (BWESQ). Statistical analysis such as Mean, SD, Pearson's product moment correlation, were computed to analyze the obtained data. Statistical significance was considered at p value <0.05. The results indicated no significant relationship between Binge Watching Behavior and Mindfulness and similar findings were reported in relation to dimensions of Binge-Watching Behavior with Mindfulness. Though mindfulness did not yield as a significantly associated variable in this study, concepts such as conscious Binge watch, locus of control can be explored further to identify the relationship with binge watching further. A control group comparison would be helpful to understand whether mindfulness or controlled processing acts as an active intervention to identify or reduce binge watching.

**Keywords:** *Binge Watching, Mindfulness, Conscious Binge Watch, Pleasure, Entertainment.*

## 1. Introduction

The term Binge watching has gained popularity in recent years especially during the phase of pandemic where individuals were captivated in their four walls and have free leisure time to engage oneself in the practice of Binge Watching (Starosta, J. A., & Izydorczyk, B. 2020). This behavior was initiated as a source of entertainment and pleasure which ultimately ends up watching frequent episodes of Television shows or a series in a single go without a break (Starosta, J. A., & Izydorczyk, B. 2020). As millions of people all over the world embrace the convenience of digital streaming and instant gratification of watching series may impact the individual's mindfulness in terms of attention, awareness and consciousness in the present moment.

According to Clinical Psychologist doctor Renee Carr, people love to binge watch because it releases a natural chemical called dopamine in the brain that makes them feel happy (The Psychology Behind Binge-Watching, 2020), responsible for feelings of happiness emerging from watching the episodes of a series without any kind of

interruption. Binge watching in meditation with taking occasional breaks for physical activity and socializing can help to reduce its negative effects in terms of impairment in attention, awareness and mindfulness.

Lastly, in our survey we have operationalized binge watching as watching series of many episodes in a single setting i.e., when an individual watches 4 to 6 or more episodes for duration of about 3 hours or more without a break in single a setting of same or different show irrespective of any streaming platform.

Mindfulness is defined as a state involving three basic aspects as consciousness, awareness, living in the present, experiencing and sensing one's own thoughts, feelings, actions and emotions at the present moment. It can also be defined as free flow of thought, awareness of mind chatter without any judgment. When an individual engages oneself in binge watching he/she become so engrossed in the story line that consequently become unaware of what's happening in their environment, isolate themselves from their own socio-cultural context and ultimately forget to live in the present moment.

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## 2. Review of Literature

An Experimental sampling which attempts to examine the role of mindfulness contributing towards psychological wellbeing. Clinical trials with cancer patients found a decrease in level of disturbances in one's mood and stress. Dispositional and state mindfulness both involve regulating one's behavior and emergence of a positive emotional state (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

A study conducted to explore various motivation that influence college Students to spend more time in binge watching and subsequent gratification where data was collected using mixed approach it involves qualitative interviews and focus group discussions to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of Binge Watching, whose findings indicate social interaction escape from reality, easy accessibility to T.V Contents and advertising motivate college students to spend more time (Panda & Pandey, 2012).

Another research investigated how Binge Watching had psychological effects such as depression and loneliness through the use of a survey questionnaire from a sample of 260 participants. Findings indicated that binge watching behavior is more prevalent among the younger age group and showed a significant correlation between Binge Watching and depression and no significant relationship between binge watching and Loneliness (Azim MD, 2017).

Research investigated the effect of binge watching with poor sleep quality and increased insomnia. They collected a sample of 423 young adults falling under the age group of 18 to 25 years, out of which 62 percent were women while the rest were men This study reported 80.6 percent to be binge watchers, and 33 percent presented with poor sleep quality (Exelmans, 2017).

A systematic review was conducted on 28 articles presenting the psychological conditions and current scenario of this behavior whose findings brought into highlight the two perspectives of Binge Watching categorized as positive and negative. The positives of Binge watching included spending free time, emergence of positive emotions, entertainment, cognition whereas the negative outcomes were related to exhibiting symptoms of behavioral addiction and excessive binge watching (Starosta & Lyzydorczyk, 2020).

A cross sectional research design including a sample of 1089 participants administered through the questionnaire whose findings indicate that the behavior of binge watching was also found to have association with psychological after effects where it was found to be antecedent of stress, Loneliness, Depression, Anxiety and Insomnia (Raza et al., 2021).

A survey research aimed at investigating the relationship between body weight and stress experienced as a result of

Binge watching during Covid-19. A total of 466 participants were assessed through an online survey whose findings indicated that the individuals experienced high levels of stress and other additional risk factors such as obesity, negative emotional triggers, lack of control to resist oneself from watching for longer durations. Concludingly it shows rise in the level of Binge watching behavior during the pandemic, and attempted to highlight the role played by interventions in reducing its negative impact (Aghababian et al., 2021).

A systematic review on mindfulness based interventions in treatment of substance use disorders revealed how interventions can play a role in reducing the psychiatric symptoms such as perceived level of stress, reduction of alcohol use contributed through the thought avoidance in relation to its use. Mindfulness through its focus on various techniques whose objective serve to decrease the reduction of risks of relapse is related to better acceptance of thoughts about drugs, emotions that are distressing, unusual physical sensations. (Skanavi et al., 2011).

Narrative Review based on the available literature on Mindfulness indicated how it can act as a preventive and complementary measure in controlling Diabetes Mellitus and its complications which is one of the major health problems at global level. The benefits of mindfulness intervention range from decreasing the level of stress and anxiety, mindfulness eating, adherence to treatment, and physical exercises. It has proved beneficiary in terms of incidence, complications and control of Diabetes Mellitus (Medina et al., 2017).

## 3. Statement of Problem

The statement highlighted in the study indicated the impact of Binge watching behavior on mindfulness among young adults during the outbreak of pandemic. The research gap was identified after exploring and developing an understanding gained through the analysis of reviewing the existing literature previously conducted on the variables mentioned in the problem statement.

## 4. Rationale

The Young adults were more vulnerable during the outbreak of pandemic as they were career oriented and required time to introspect, give time to oneself. For relaxation and source of entertainment they engaged in such kind of behavior which somehow impacted their attention, awareness and contributed towards their lack of ability to live in the present moment which acted as a major source of deviation from them being career oriented and highlighted the need to study the association between the two variables i.e., Binge Watching and Mindfulness.

It was identified that though several researches have been done on these variables separately, no research has been conducted in the past aimed at measuring the association between these two variables i.e., - Binge Watching and

Mindfulness. Majority of these researches were done in the western countries. Very minimal literature is available with regard to the multiple influences on Binge Watching particularly during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic. There is no study in the past conducted on exploring the effects of Binge watching on attention awareness and mindfulness in the Indian context. The present study aimed to fill this research gap.

### 5. Significance of the study

The present research assisted to explore the factors ranging from attention, awareness and mindfulness as a whole and their association with addiction of watching series of episodes that deviates the young adults in simply decaying their golden hours which they somehow might contribute towards shaping their career by being more focused, experiencing and sensing one's own thoughts, feelings actions and emotions at the present moment.

### 6. Theory

Various theories have been put forth by different researchers which attempted to explain the context of present study. One of them is Mindfulness-to-Meaning Theory. This theory focused on the cognitive, emotional and neurobiological processes of an individual which resulted in the stimulation of the positive psychological state and a sense of meaning making (Garland, 2015). This theory allows an individual to enter into the state of awareness through mindfulness and enhances their attention towards unnoticed information of the past and deviate oneself from stress appraisals and promotes emergence of positive emotions even in the phase of adverse circumstances. This helps the individual to move towards the path of Self Actualization in sense of deriving a meaning in life and promotes a sense of purpose in life (Garland, 2015).

This theory is connected with our present research as it was hypothesized that when an individual engages in the behavior of binge watching it somehow reduces the attention span, awareness as well as the mindfulness i.e., individual deviates oneself from living in the present moment. This theory contributed towards formulation of the hypothesis of the present research.

### 7. Methodology

#### **Objective and Hypothesis**

This research aimed to investigate the association between Binge Watching Behavior and Mindfulness among young adults during the phase of pandemic.

#### **Binge Watching Behavior**

Binge watching Behavior is defined as watching a series of many episodes in a single setting i.e., when an individual watches 4 to 6 or more episodes for duration of about 3 hours or more without a break in a single setting of the

same or different show irrespective of any streaming platform.

#### **Mindfulness**

Mindfulness can be defined as a state involving three basic aspects as consciousness, awareness, living in the present, experiencing and sensing one's own thoughts, feelings, actions and emotions at the present moment.

#### **Hypothesis**

Individuals engaged in binge watching behavior have a significant impact on one's mindfulness among young adults during the pandemic.

#### **Design and Paradigm**

The Research Design Chosen for this study was Correlational Research Design which involved the investigation of relation between the two variables of the research i.e., Binge Watching Behavior and Mindfulness which involved researcher no control and manipulation over the variables. It attempted to establish the statistical relationship between two or more variables indicated by some sort of relationship where it is presumably assumed that modification in one might lead to a change in the other variable which should not be mistaken that one caused the other as in experimental design. The degree of relationship between the variables was defined by the Correlation Coefficient ranging from -1 to +1.

#### **Sample and Sampling Techniques**

The Study Population consisted of young adults belonging to the age group of 18 - 25. The total sample size for the present study comprised 130 participants in total. Each participant was administered through the questionnaires used for measuring each variable. For sample selection convenience sampling was used, a non-probability method that involved the collection of data from the participants who are readily and conveniently available to become a part of the study. In order to be a part of the study, the participants had to meet the following inclusion criteria. It was made sure that participants (both males and females) were from the age group of 18 - 25, Participants must have engaged themselves in Binge Watching Behavior irrespective of the streaming platform during the phase of pandemic and must be the resident of India. An individual should be included in the study if he or she watched a minimum of 4 to 6 episodes for a duration of three or more than three hours in a single setting of the same or a different show irrespective of streaming platform.

#### **Measurements and Tools**

The Measurement tools for the method of data collection of the present study involved the use of standardized scales for measuring both the variables. Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale MAAS (Brown & Ryan, 2003) a 15-item scale consisted of statements where the participant is

required to choose the best alternatives ranging from 1 to 6 indicating the frequency on the basis of one's own reflection of their experiences. It attempted to measure the receptive state of mind indication of one's own awareness to the present as well as the measurement of certain aspects of attention under the core umbrella of the core characteristic of Mindfulness.

The tool used to measure the other variable was Binge Watching Engagement and Symptoms Questionnaire (BWESQ) English version developed by Flayelle et al 2020, is a 40 item scale consisted of statements which requires the participants to choose an appropriate option ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree which intended to measure the aspects of various subfield related to the behavior of Binge Watching such as Pleasure, Binge Watching, Desire/Savouring, Loss of Control, Pleasure Preservation, Engagement, Dependency.

### Procedure

The foremost step in the study was to identify the topic of interest on the basis of which the problem statement was stated. In the present study the topic of interest was identified as Impact of Binge Watching Behavior on Mindfulness. To gather more relevant and detailed understanding about this topic, the literature was reviewed to get a clearer view and understanding about various aspects of the study that is indicative of research in terms of providing supporting evidence for the variables chosen for the study.

After this the aim, objective and the rationale of the study was followed with the objective to investigate the association between binge watching behavior and mindfulness among young adults during the phase of pandemic. The sample included the participants who fulfilled the inclusion criteria i.e. young adults engaged in Binge Watching (watching 4 to 6 or more episodes for duration of 3 hours or more), can be of any gender either male or female or other, must be the resident of India.

The method of data collection involved the use of standardized questionnaires for measuring each variable of the study. The google form was circulated through online mode where participants after reading the appropriate instructions responded to both the questionnaires combined in a form.

All the ethics of the study were taken into consideration such as the participants were informed about the nature of the study and an informed consent was obtained from

interested participants stating that their responses would be kept anonymous and their identity will not be revealed, it will remain confidential. Participants Were also informed that their participation was voluntary and could be terminated at any point.

### 8. Results

The Statistical Significance for the computations was fixed at 0.05. Descriptive Statistics such as Mean and standard deviation were used to describe and check the normality of the data. In Inferential Statistics Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient method was used which attempted to measure the association between the variables in terms of strengths and direction on an interval scale, the direction of the variables can be either positive or negative.

The mean of Mindfulness was 60.4+13 whereas it was 93.7+24.7 for Binge Watching. Shapiro Wilk was used to test the normality of data where the hypothesis of normality was rejected as the p value came out to be less than 0.05. For Mindfulness and Binge watching Behaviour the p values came out to be 0.981 and 0.992 respectively where hypothesis of normality was accepted as the p value was greater than 0.05, hence these data were normally distributed.

### 9. Data Interpretation

The Correlation Matrix findings indicated that there was no significant correlation between the two variables i.e., Binge watching Behaviour and Mindfulness among young adults ( $r = -.085$ ,  $p = .334$ ) as p value is more than 0.05. The data was normally distributed as indicated by Shapiro Wilk where p values comes out be greater than the level of significance i.e., 0.05.

Table 3 indicated that the seven dimensions ranging from engagement, positive emotions, desire, pleasure preservation, binge watching, dependency and loss of control incorporated in the scale of Binge Watching Engagement and Symptoms Questionnaires had no significant relationship with Mindfulness (p value > 0.05).

### 10. Discussion

A cross sectional study was conducted on 130 participants that was intended to measure the impact of Binge Watching Behavior on Mindfulness among young adults using the convenience sampling method. Interestingly the results indicated a non-significant relationship among

**Table 1:** Descriptives of Mindfulness and Binge Watching among young adults (N=130)

	Mindfulness	Binge Watching
Mean	60.4	93.7
Standard deviation	13.0	24.7
Minimum	21.0	40.0
Maximum	88.0	156

**Table 2:** Correlation between Mindfulness and Binge Watching among young adults (N=130) Pearson's Correlation Between Study Variables

		<b>Binge Watching</b>
<b>Mindfulness</b>	r	-0.085
	p	0.334

**Table 3:** Correlation between the dimensions of Mindfulness and Binge Watching among young adults (N=130)

		Engagement		Positive Emotions		Desire		Pleasure Preservation		Binge watching		Dependency		Loss of Control	
<b>Positive Emotions</b>	r	0.741	***	—											
	p	<0.001		—											
<b>Desire</b>	r	0.670	***	0.658	***	—									
	p	<0.001		<0.001		—									
<b>Pleasure Preservation</b>	r	0.731	***	0.549	***	0.506	***	—							
	p	<0.001		<0.001		<0.001		—							
<b>Binge watching</b>	r	0.804	***	0.699	***	0.622	***	0.685	***	—					
	p	<0.001		<0.001		<0.001		<0.001		—					
<b>Dependency</b>	r	0.666	***	0.530	***	0.494	***	0.671	***	0.697	***	—			
	p	<0.001		<0.001		<0.001		<0.001		<0.001		—			
<b>Loss of Control</b>	r	0.784	***	0.591	***	0.519	***	0.737	***	0.776	***	0.734	***	—	
	p	<0.001		<0.001		<0.001		<0.001		<0.001		<0.001		—	
<b>Mindfulness</b>	r	-0.019		0.082		-0.052		-0.128		-0.141		-0.170		-0.099	
	p	0.826		0.356		0.556		0.147		0.109		0.053		0.261	

Note. \* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

both the variables and similarly no relationship was found to exist among the dimensions of Binge Watching and Mindfulness.

The results are found to be inconsistent with the existing literature whose results indicate that Binge Watching Behavior reduces the social interaction and inturn motivates them to engage more in Binge Watching Behavior (Panda & Pandey, 2012), whereas the present study highlights no correlation between dimension of binge watching i.e Engagement and Mindfulness (living in the present moment). Moreover it is found to be associated with depressive symptom, loneliness (Azim md., 2017) . A significant proportion of people i.e 33 % complained of poor sleep quality (Exelmans, 2017).

There has been found a pattern of addiction and excessive binge watching among participants identified as a negative outcome (Starosta & Izydorczyk, 2020). Additional risk factors include obesity, negative emotional trigger, inability to resist to watch for longer duration.

All the above studies concludingly shows an inclination towards reduced span of attention to other relevant aspects of daily life experiences (inclusive of items mentioned in Mindfulness attention awareness scale used

in the present study), decline in other relevant cognitive areas of individual life such as awareness, concentration, sleep disturbance, binge watching found to be antecedent of stress, Loneliness, Depression, Anxiety and Insomnia and occupational distress up to certain level are reported (Raza et al.,2021).

Based on the findings of existing literature explored throughout the hypothesis of this study was formulated which interestingly got rejected reporting of results completely opposite to what was expected brings in notice of all the readers to these surprising results.

The inverse results bring in limelight to the term Conscious Binge Watch drawing attention towards the possible reasons supported by an article. Conscious Binge Watch contributes towards enhancing mindful relationships among couples as they spend valuable time together in exploring new stimuli which adds on a new topic of discussion which in turns contributes towards forming a strong emotional bond. (Could Binge-watching Be Good for You? - Headspace, n.d.-a)

Binge Watching leads to formulation of strong bond also known as binge bond, By sharing endorphins through shared experiences contributes towards shaping a positive

perspective towards one's relationship proved to be supportive for couples (Gomillion, 2017). It relies on the fact of how mindful an individual is in front of the screen assisting them to manage their daily routine

Without developing a behavioral pattern revolving around negative outcomes such as obesity, lack of control and trigger of negative emotions, behavior addiction of excessive binge watch. These negative outcomes were inconsistent with the present research as the participants must have engaged in conscious binge watch which is not deteriorating their occupational dysfunctioning and not causing relevant distress indicating a control over oneself.

An Interactive Study by Harris exhibits incongruency with the present research indicating that Binge Watching is often not supported with Negative feelings i.e., 73% individuals experience positive feelings while engaging in such behavior (Netflix, Inc., 2018). Identified and explored by Anthropologist McCracken, 76% Individuals identified in their busy schedule as "Welcome Refuge" (Netflix, Inc., 2018) Underlie this behavior as a source to entertain or take a short break from one's busy schedule.

Michael T. Motley underscores the natural tendency of human too often compare one's characteristics or similarity in one's experiences with that to the characters of a T.V Serials, series or shows. It primarily relies on one's approach by being more mindful and aware when it comes to strengthens one's relationship with partner or any other. It acts as a source to spend valuable time with close ones adding a flavor to the ordinary topics of discussion revolving around episodes of series, movies, T.V shows. (Could Binge-watching Be Good for You? - Headspace, n.d.-a)

Even though The time span between deciding whether to join the real world or continue with one more episode is very short i.e. less than a minute it takes to switch off our mode from reshifting back to the real world or continue to watch. This completely relies on individual decision making i.e. to make a mindful decision. (Could Binge-watching Be Good for You? - Headspace, n.d.-a)

The rationale of this research focused on young adults as the target population who were more inclined towards their personal growth in terms of career orientation and they might engage in such activities for their pleasure as a source of entertainment. By keeping in mind their major primary goal to attain in life and keeping aside all factors circling around binge watch addiction they focus on carrying out their responsibilities by being mindful and aware of their own roles and responsibilities.

### 11. Limitations

Smaller sample size has been taken into consideration (i.e. sample size of 130 participants). Mixed method approach could have been used to gain an in-depth understanding of both the variables (i.e Binge Watch and Mindfulness).

Different age groups and comparisons among different age groups were not taken into account in the present research. Others variables could also have been looked into other than Mindfulness. Majority of the data have been gathered from female participants so the results could not be generalized to males. The present research is not gender specific (i.e. inclusion of both males and females participants).

### 12. Implications

The present study assists the readers to understand the mindset and the behavioral pattern of young adults in specific when they have free leisure especially during covid 19.

It assists to gain a better understanding of the aspects revolving around the concept of mindfulness which is used as a therapeutic intervention with a key component of clinical value attached to it in the treatment process. It is used to treat symptoms of Depression, Anxiety, Substance Abuse, Chronic pain, Insomnia and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.

Binge Watching works on the Principle of Automatic Processing, a deductive approach which requires less cognitive effort on the part of participant which also allow them to engage in other activities such as eating favorite snack, which requires less attention on the part of participant correlating well with findings of present research.

Mindfulness is used in various psychoeducation programmes irrespective of the therapeutic approach as it contributed to make the audience to gain more insight of the concept when used in combination with other relevant variables as the present research focuses on Binge Watching which is a primary distractible variable. The components of Mindfulness such as acceptance, compassion, attention and equanimity can be maintained even if individuals enter into the realm of easily desirable influencing variables. Future studies could explore the reasons behind no significant relationship between both the variables.

### 13. Conclusion

The results indicated a non-significant relationship between Binge Watching Behavior and Mindfulness and similar findings (i.e., non-significant relationship) were reported in relation to dimensions of Binge Watching Behavior with Mindfulness. As participants have engaged oneself in Conscious Binge Watch as a source of entertainment and pleasure which allow them to be aware and Mindful of the present moment and carry out their responsibilities without deteriorating an individual occupational functioning.

### 14. Acknowledgements

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faculties of the Department of Psychology, School of Social Sciences, CHRIST (Deemed to be University) Delhi NCR.

### 15. Author Contribution

The manuscript was conceptualized by Aastha Sachdeva along with the co-author Prof. Priyesh. C. Data collection was carried by Aastha Sachdeva, while the data analysis was performed by Prof. Priyesh C. Drafting and proof-reading of the manuscript were conducted by both the authors.

### 16. Funding

The data was collected through the use of google forms which was circulated through online mode.

### 17. Data Availability

The data gathered from the participants is attached in the given link of the excel sheet:

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1HWEZ2Z6ASWbk18sa6ubn0M88xC3MuluLuzgX\\_qpGLwE/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1HWEZ2Z6ASWbk18sa6ubn0M88xC3MuluLuzgX_qpGLwE/edit?usp=sharing)

### 18. Ethical Standards

The present study was conducted keeping in mind the ethical considerations that have been put forth by the American Psychological Association code of ethics.

### 19. Informed Consent

All the relevant and required information pertaining to the research such as information about study benefits, risks, fundings, etc., were provided to the participants by the researcher before the data collection process. Once the details were disclosed to the participants the participants were given a choice to participate in the research to ensure voluntary participation or to withdraw at any point of time further.

### 20. Conflict of interest

The authors hereby declare that there is no conflict of interest during the course of this research study.

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