

Feelings of loneliness and depression linked to binge-watching television

January 29 2015

It seems harmless: getting settled in for a night of marathon session for a favorite TV show, like House of Cards. But why do we binge-watch TV, and can it really be harmless? A recent study by researchers at the University of Texas at Austin found that the more lonely and depressed you are, the more likely you are to binge-watch.

Yoon Hi Sung, Eun Yeon Kang and Wei-Na Lee from the University of Texas at Austin will present their findings at the 65th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The researchers conducted a survey on 316 18- to 29-year-olds on how often they watched TV; how often they had feelings of loneliness, depression and self-regulation deficiency; and finally on how often they binge-watched TV. They found that the more lonely and depressed the study participants were, the more likely they were to binge-watch TV, using this activity to move away from [negative feelings](#).

The findings also showed that those who lacked the ability to control themselves were more likely to binge-watch. These viewers were unable to stop clicking "Next" even when they were aware that they had other tasks to complete.

Little empirical research has been done on binge-watching since it is such a new [behavior](#). Psychological factors such as loneliness, depression, and self-regulation deficiency have been known as important indicators of binge behavior in general. For example, people engage in addictive behaviors to temporarily forget the reality that involves

[loneliness](#) and depression. Also, an individual's lack of self-regulation is likely to influence the level of his or her [addictive behavior](#). Therefore, this study tried to understand binge-watching behavior from this set of known factors.

"Even though some people argue that binge-watching is a harmless addiction, findings from our study suggest that binge-watching should no longer be viewed this way," Sung said. "Physical fatigue and problems such as obesity and other health problems are related to binge-watching and they are a cause for concern. When binge-watching becomes rampant, viewers may start to neglect their work and their relationships with others. Even though people know they should not, they have difficulty resisting the desire to watch episodes continuously. Our research is a step toward exploring binge-watching as an important media and social phenomenon."

More information: "A Bad Habit for Your Health? An Exploration of Psychological Factors for Binge-Watching Behavior," by Yoon Hi Sung, Eun Yeon Kang and Wei-Na Lee; to be presented at the 65th Annual International Communication Association Conference, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 21-25 May 2015.

Provided by International Communication Association

Citation: Feelings of loneliness and depression linked to binge-watching television (2015, January 29) retrieved 20 March 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-01-loneliness-depression-linked-binge-watching-television.html>

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