



INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

(Peer-reviewed, Refereed, Indexed & Open Access Journal)

DOI : 03.2021-11278686

ISSN : 2582-8568

IMPACT FACTOR : 8.031 (SJIF 2025)

Exploring the Impact of Binge-Watching Morbid Content on the Emotional Regulation of Young Adults

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DOI No. **03.2021-11278686** DOI Link :: <https://doi-ds.org/doi/10.2582/05.2025-76862831/IRJHIS2505049>

ABSTRACT:

Binge-watching has quickly become a popular way for young adults to consume information, especially as digital streaming platforms have grown in popularity. Even while it's sometimes seen as a harmless pastime, excessive use has been linked to psychological problems, particularly when the material is morbid. Themes like death, violence, and human suffering are examples of morbid content, which requires a high level of emotional engagement and may have an impact on emotional regulation systems. The current study investigates how young adults' emotional regulation is affected by binge-watching morbid content, with a particular emphasis on the predictive functions of morbid curiosity and problematic binge-watching habits. The Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) measures both expressive suppression and cognitive reappraisal. Data were gathered from a sample of 100 people, all between the ages of 18 and 30, using a quantitative research approach. The Emotional Regulation Questionnaire, the Morbid Curiosity Scale, and the Problematic Series Watching Scale were filled out by the participants. IBM SPSS software was used for data analysis, and multiple regression and correlational analysis were used to test the hypotheses. It was expected that problematic binge-watching behaviors would negatively predict emotional regulation outcomes, but morbid curiosity would be positively related with emotional regulation abilities based on theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence. The study's conclusions are intended to advance knowledge of the ways in which new media consumption trends interact with young people's emotional development, providing important information for media literacy and mental health programs.

Keywords: *Binge-watching, Morbid Curiosity, Emotional Regulation, Young Adults, Cognitive Reappraisal, Expressive Suppression*

INTRODUCTION:

In the digital era, the proliferation of streaming services has revolutionized how individuals consume visual media. Platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Disney+ have popularized

binge-watching, defined as viewing multiple episodes of a television series in a single sitting.

This mode of consumption, once considered a leisure activity, is increasingly scrutinized due to its potential implications on mental and emotional well-being. Of particular concern is the trend among young adults to binge-watch content characterized by dark, morbid, or psychologically disturbing themes—such as true crime, psychological thrillers, horror, and documentaries involving violence or trauma. This type of media, while compelling, can evoke intense emotional reactions and may influence the psychological state of viewers more profoundly than lighter forms of entertainment.

Background of the Study:

One of the most remarkable phenomena within this context is **binge-watching**—the act of consuming multiple episodes of television series or online content in a single sitting without planned interruptions (Starosta & Izydorczyk, 2020). Initially celebrated as a pleasurable leisure activity offering instant gratification, binge-watching has, over time, been critically examined for its potential links to problematic behavioral patterns and psychological health outcomes (Panda & Pandey, 2017; Chang & Peng, 2022). With the ever-increasing variety of content genres, one particular domain attracting notable attention is **morbid content**, which encompasses material centered around death, violence, crime, disasters, and human suffering. **Morbid curiosity**, the psychological drive to seek information about dangerous, macabre, or unsettling phenomena, is an essential factor contributing to the consumption of morbid content (Scrivner, 2021; Zuckerman & Litle, 1986). Humans often engage in morbid curiosity for entertainment, deriving pleasure from safe exposure to hypothetical threats. Historically, scholars have referred to the popularity of frightening entertainment as the paradox of horror. (Scrivner, C. W. (2022).

Although morbid curiosity can serve evolutionary and adaptive purposes, such as threat learning and emotional resilience (Byrne, 2018; Sanders, 2023), excessive or repeated exposure to distressing media content may disrupt normal emotional functioning. Indeed, binge-watching morbid material has the potential to exacerbate emotional dysregulation—manifested as difficulties in managing and responding appropriately to emotional experiences (Gross, 1998; Gouveia et al., 2018). The shift towards the normalization of morbid themes in popular media is partly fueled by the audience's increasing appetite for real crime documentaries, horror series, disaster reenactments, and dystopian narratives (Fox, 2013; Scrivner & Stubbersfield, 2022).

Streaming platforms such as Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime capitalize on this fascination by continuously producing and promoting dark-themed content, especially after the widespread isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic, when people turned to media for comfort and escapism (Rahman & Arif, 2021; Sigre- Leirós et al., 2023). As binge-watching behaviors intensified globally, concerns regarding the psychological implications of overexposure to morbid content became more

salient (Mahmoud & Abdul Wahab, 2021; Flayelle et al., 2017). For **young adults**, a demographic characterized by significant psychological and social transitions, the impacts of binge-watching habits are particularly concerning. Young adulthood, typically spanning the ages of 18 to 30 years, is marked by the consolidation of identity, the development of emotional regulation capacities, and increased exposure to social and professional pressures (Hans & Kaur, 2024; Rosli & Mahudin, 2024). Emotional regulation is a crucial adaptive function that influences coping mechanisms, interpersonal relationships, and resilience to stress (Gouveia et al., 2018; Lavanya & Manjula, 2017). If compromised, poor emotional regulation can predispose individuals to mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, and personality dysfunctions (Ghosh & Halder, 2020; Prakash et al., 2015). **Binge-watching behaviors** have been associated with negative psychological outcomes including impulsivity, procrastination, escapism, loneliness, and emotional instability (Siraj & PG, 2023; Nair & Meenakshi, 2023). Notably, Flayelle, Maurage, and Billieux (2017) found that binge watching is not simply an excessive leisure activity but can reflect deeper emotional needs and regulation failures. When the content consumed involves recurring exposure to death, violence, and emotional trauma, as is the case with morbid content, the need for sophisticated emotional regulation becomes even greater (Scrivner, 2022; Alfonsi et al., 2023). The **psychological construct of morbid curiosity** plays a central role in understanding why individuals seek out disturbing content. Studies indicate that individuals high in morbid curiosity report higher openness to experience, sensation seeking, and exploratory tendencies (Scrivner, 2021; Javed, 2024). Morbid curiosity may serve functional purposes by allowing individuals to mentally simulate dangerous situations and enhance survival-relevant knowledge (Byrne, 2018; Sanders, 2023). However, Scrivner (2022) notes that an unchecked appetite for morbid experiences, when combined with compulsive binge-watching patterns, may overwhelm the individual's emotional processing capacities, potentially resulting in emotional exhaustion, desensitization, or hypervigilance. **Binge-watching morbid content** specifically poses unique psychological risks distinct from general binge-watching. Unlike comedic or romantic genres, morbid content demands higher levels of emotional engagement and cognitive appraisal to process fear, disgust, and sadness (Scrivner & Stubbersfield, 2022; Fox, 2013). The Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (Gouveia et al., 2018) and related empirical studies show that individuals with poor emotional regulation abilities are less capable of reinterpreting distressing experiences adaptively, making them more vulnerable to the negative emotional aftereffects of intense media exposure (Lavanya & Manjula, 2017; Maity & Sahai, 2018). Furthermore, binge-watching patterns have evolved due to increased media accessibility and sociocultural shifts, such as greater acceptance of solitary media consumption and the gamification of streaming interfaces (Starosta, Izydorczyk, Sitnik-Warchulska, & Lizińczyk, 2021). These factors promote prolonged viewing sessions and heighten psychological immersion in disturbing narratives, reinforcing

maladaptive coping styles (Nourin Siraj & PG, 2023; Chandra et al., 2023).

Despite growing scholarly attention on binge-watching, the impact of morbid content specifically remains underexplored. While research has shown a link between problematic binge-watching and poor mental health outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and emotional dysregulation (Favieri et al., 2023; Starosta et al., 2020), there is limited empirical data on how morbid content itself affects emotional regulation. Emotional regulation—the ability to manage and respond to emotional experiences in adaptive ways—is a critical component of psychological health. In young adulthood, a developmental stage characterized by identity formation, emotional vulnerability, and transitional stressors, maladaptive media consumption patterns may pose significant risks. This study investigates how the combination of binge-watching and exposure to morbid content influences the emotional regulation abilities of young adults.

1. Defining Variables: **Binge-Watching:** The act of watching multiple episodes of a TV show in one sitting. According to Netflix (PR Newswire, 2013), binge-watching is defined as "watching between two to six episodes of a TV show in one sitting," a behavior that has become increasingly normalized due to the accessibility of streaming platforms.

2. **Morbid Content:** Media that individuals **intentionally** choose to consume despite its dark, unsettling, or disturbing nature. According to Oosterwijk (2017), morbid content includes themes of **death, violence, psychological distress, crime, and horror**, which evoke complex emotional responses ranging from fear and discomfort to fascination and curiosity. The tendency to seek out information about threats in this manner has been called morbid curiosity (Scrivner, 2021a; Scrivner, 2021b; Scrivner & Clasen, 2021). The propensity for morbid curiosity can help explain the allure of frightening and violent entertainment, including horror films, true crime, and violent sports. Recently, Scrivner (2021b) created the Morbid Curiosity Scale as a way to assess overall trait levels of morbid curiosity as well as trait morbid curiosity in four domains: Minds of dangerous people, violence, paranormal danger, and body violation.

3. **Emotional Regulation:** The ability to monitor, evaluate, and modify emotional reactions to achieve a desired state of well-being. According to Aldao et al. (2010), emotion regulation is the mechanism through which individuals **intentionally or unintentionally** modify their emotions to achieve a desired outcome. Emotion regulation can be defined as an individual's ability to respond to ongoing demands of an experience with a range of emotions that are both socially acceptable and adaptable enough to allow or delay spontaneous reactions as needed. This process encompasses both extrinsic and intrinsic mechanisms responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and modifying emotional responses—not only within oneself but also in relation to others (Maity & Sahai, 2018).

2. Significance of the Study:

Understanding the psychological implications of binge-watching morbid content is crucial in

today's media landscape. Given that young adults are among the most avid consumers of streaming content, insights from this study can inform mental health interventions, digital consumption guidelines, and media literacy programs. Furthermore, the research addresses a significant gap in existing literature by focusing on the nuanced interplay between binge-watching behavior, content type, and emotional regulation.

3. Research Objectives:

To examine the relationship between binge-watching and emotional regulation.

To assess the impact of morbid content specifically on emotional regulation.

To explore whether binge-watching morbid content predicts greater emotional dysregulation among young adults.

4. Assumptions:

Participants will provide honest and accurate self-reports on their viewing habits and emotional experiences.

The scales employed are valid and reliable measures of the constructs under investigation. Emotional responses to morbid content differ from those to neutral or positive content.

Several core assumptions underpin this study:

1. Exposure to morbid content necessitates active emotional regulation to process and adaptively respond to intense negative emotions such as fear, disgust, and sadness (Scrivner, 2022; Sanders, 2023).
 2. Repeated binge-watching of morbid content may impair emotional regulation through cumulative emotional burden, leading to emotional blunting, hyperarousal, or dysregulation (Flayelle et al., 2017; Alfonsi et al., 2023).
 3. Young adults represent a vulnerable population due to ongoing neurocognitive development, high exposure to social pressures, and evolving identity structures, all of which influence emotional resilience (Hans & Kaur, 2024; Lavanya & Manjula, 2017).
 4. Individual differences moderate outcomes, with traits such as impulsivity, loneliness, social anxiety, and baseline emotion regulation abilities shaping the psychological impact of binge-watching morbid content (Siraj & PG, 2023; Starosta et al., 2021).
- Theoretical Framework** - The study is grounded in Gross's (1998) Process Model of Emotion Regulation, which posits that individuals engage in various strategies to modulate their emotional responses. This framework provides a lens through which to understand how frequent exposure to emotionally charged content—particularly in a binge-watching context—can influence one's ability to regulate affective experiences.

Rationale of the Study:

The evolving patterns of media consumption in the digital age, particularly the rise of binge-watching behaviors, have prompted increasing scholarly interest regarding their psychological

impacts. While previous studies have explored the negative outcomes associated with general binge-watching behaviors — such as procrastination, loneliness, and emotional instability (Flayelle et al., 2017; Siraj & PG, 2023) — limited research specifically addresses the unique influence of binge-watching morbid content. Morbid content, characterized by themes of death, violence, and psychological distress, evokes stronger emotional engagement compared to neutral or comedic media (Scrivner, 2021; Fox, 2013). However, the psychological consequences of repeated exposure to such intense material remain under-explored. There is a particular gap in understanding how morbid curiosity, a natural drive to seek out frightening or unsettling stimuli (Scrivner, 2022), interacts with binge-watching behaviors to influence emotional regulation capacities. Given that young adulthood is a critical period for the development of emotional and psychological resilience (Hans & Kaur, 2024; Lavanya & Manjula, 2017), understanding the impact of media habits during this stage is vital. Emotional regulation is fundamental to adaptive functioning; impairments can lead to a range of negative mental health outcomes, including depression, anxiety, and maladaptive coping (Aldao et al., 2010; Ghosh & Halder, 2020). This study addresses a significant gap in the literature by:

- Examining binge-watching behavior specifically in the context of morbid content rather than general media consumption,
- Investigating the dual role of morbid curiosity and problematic binge-watching in predicting emotional regulation,
- Focusing on young adults, a vulnerable and under-researched demographic in this context.
- Moreover, the findings of this research hold practical relevance for mental health professionals, media psychologists, and educators by informing the development of targeted interventions, media literacy programs, and digital well-being strategies tailored to the challenges of modern media environments.

BINGE WATCHING:

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

1. Starosta and Izydorczyk (2020) carried up a systematic review to examine the psychological conditions and effects of binge-watching utilizing the PRISMA framework. Through the use of keywords like "binge-watching" and "addiction," they were able to search several databases (EBSCO, Google Scholar) and find 29 empirical and quantitative studies that were published between 2013 and 2020. The investigations, which had a total sample size of 32,464 people, mostly young adults (18–29 years old), were mostly carried out in the USA (55%) and Europe (32%). The results demonstrated the correlation between binge-watching and emotional control, personality traits, and participation, while also emphasizing the detrimental effects, including sleep difficulties, guilt, problems with impulse control, and links to loneliness, sadness, and anxiety. The psychological complexity of binge-watching is highlighted by their findings, which imply that excessive

participation might lead to negative behavioral patterns and emotional dysregulation even while it may be used as a coping method. Panda and Pandey (2017) used a mixed-method approach to investigate the reasons for and consequences of binge-watching among college students. To find out why students watch for extended periods of time, the study used a quantitative survey, focus groups, and qualitative interviews. The results showed that the main drivers of binge-watching are advertising, social engagement, escape from reality, and content accessibility. Interestingly, the study discovered that negative gratifications, like shame or unhappiness after watching, paradoxically encouraged the impulse to binge-watch more, starting a vicious circle of consumption. The results showed that the main drivers of binge-watching are advertising, social engagement, escape from reality, and content accessibility. Interestingly, the study discovered that negative gratifications, like shame or unhappiness after watching, paradoxically encouraged the impulse to binge watch more, starting a vicious circle of consuming. The study emphasizes the consequences for students' well-being because binge watching too much can affect lifestyle choices, productivity, and mental health. The study also offers strategic insights for streaming platforms, highlighting the ways in which platform design and psychological demands influence customer behavior. Chang and Peng (2022) did a qualitative study to investigate the experiences and views of binge-watchers regarding addictive behavior. The study used seven focus-group interviews with 25 Taiwanese binge-watchers who self-identified as binge-watchers to analyze binge-watching behavior using behavioral addiction criteria. Instead of focusing on time spent, participants defined binge-viewing as watching successive episodes of a series with continuous content. They expressed enjoyment and social advantages from binge-watching, but they mainly disregarded any detrimental health effects, even though they realized that it would interfere with their regular routines. It's interesting to note that although most participants thought binge-watching would be addictive, they did not think of themselves as addicted. The study draws attention to the debates around the addictive nature of binge-watching and recommends more investigation into its possible mechanics and psychological impacts.

2. Mahmoud and Abdul Wahab (2021) carried out a qualitative study to investigate the causes and effects of binge-watching among Malaysian university students. They conducted mini-focus groups with 16 binge-watchers who were discovered through a background survey, using the active audience notion as a framework. According to thematic analysis, students binge-watch television shows for amusement, relaxation, escape, and series immersion. Thematic analysis indicates that students binge-watch TV for entertainment, relaxation, escape, and series immersion. But it also has short-term social (procrastination, low productivity, social neglect) and psychological (fatigue, dizziness, emotional attachment) effects. Notwithstanding these consequences, binge-watching was thought to be a fun and fulfilling pastime. The study offers important qualitative insights on binge-watching behavior in the Malaysian setting and emphasizes how streaming platforms have changed

media consumption patterns.

3. Rahman and Arif (2021) carried out an exploratory study on Bangladeshi Netflix users' binge-watching behaviors during the COVID-19 outbreak. 105 Netflix binge-watchers from Dhaka were chosen for the study using convenience sampling and a cross-sectional research approach. Because of lockdown constraints, data was gathered via an online survey that was administered over Facebook Messenger. According to research, cellphones were the most popular device for binge-watching, and Netflix's extensive content catalog encouraged longer viewing sessions. Participants binge-watched for more than 70 hours a month on average, and the "one more episode" syndrome was identified as a major problem. The study offers a useful viewpoint on media consumption practices during times of social isolation by shedding light on the reasons behind binge-watching, its consumption patterns, and its detrimental effects.

4. Rosli and Mahudin (2024) examined the connection between 149 Malaysian undergraduate students, ages 18 to 25, and psychological variables, particularly stress, social interaction anxiety, and loneliness, and binge-watching activity. The study used validated psychological measures, such as the UCLA Loneliness Scale (Version 3), Perceived Stress Scale, Social Interaction Anxiety Scale, and Binge-Watching Addiction Questionnaire, in a cross-sectional online survey. According to the findings, binge-watching was substantially associated with social interaction anxiety and loneliness, while perceived stress did not significantly connect with the habit. The Uses and Gratification Theory suggests that students may watch television for extended periods of time in order to satisfy social needs and feel gratified, as social interaction anxiety was found to be the only predictor of binge-watching. In order to reduce excessive binge-watching among college students, the study emphasizes the necessity of programs that target social interaction issues.

5. Hans and Kaur (2024) examined how, in the age of video-on-demand streaming services like Netflix, Disney+ Hotstar, and Amazon Prime Video, binge-watching and mental health among rising adults (18–34 years old) relate to one another. Both positive and bad effects can result from binge-watching, which is defined as watching TV series or movies for extended periods of time in a row. It can increase autonomy while also evoking unpleasant emotions like regret and shame. MHC-SF (Mental Health Continuum-Short Form) and BWESQ (Binge-Watching Engagement and Symptoms Questionnaire) were used in the study to evaluate binge-watching behavior and mental health. Regression analysis, t-tests, and correlation all showed a substantial inverse association between binge-watching and mental health, with problematic binge-watching serving as a powerful predictor of mental health. The study also revealed that men claimed higher mental health and binge-watched more than women. The results show the range of binge-watching activity, from problematic to recreational, and the possible effects it may have on mental health.

6. Flayelle, Maurage, and Billieux (2017) investigated binge-watching tendencies in a qualitative

study employing a focus group methodology. Prior to a 1.5-hour focus group with seven regular TV series viewers, an online survey was conducted to evaluate the reasons and behaviors of binge-watching. Frequency, structural, and theme analysis were used to examine the data. Motivation (such as enjoyment and escapism), engagement patterns (such as frequency and emotional involvement), and TV show structural features (such as cliffhangers and auto-play features) were the three main dimensions that surfaced. Even while participants acknowledged binge-watching, they did not consider themselves addicted, indicating that in order to comprehend binge-watching in a more comprehensive psychological context, it is necessary to go beyond conventional addiction frameworks.

7. Nair and Meenakshi (2023) investigated how procrastination, binge-watching, and life satisfaction relate to each other among young adults in India. Based on a sample of 303 participants (158 females and 145 males) between the ages of 18 and 25, the study used the Life Satisfaction Scale (LSS), the Irrational Procrastination Scale (IPS), and the Problematic Series Watching Scale (PSWS). Using Pearson's correlation analysis and independent sample t-tests, the study found no discernible gender differences in procrastination, life satisfaction, or binge-watching. Procrastination and life satisfaction, as well as binge-watching and procrastination, were found to be significantly correlated, however binge-watching and life happiness did not significantly correlate.

8. Ramchandani, Deshpande, and Shah (2023) investigated the psychological impacts of binge-watching in a study named "Binge-Watching and its Relation to Impulsivity, Loneliness, and Social Anxiety among Youth in Mumbai." The Binge Watching Addiction Questionnaire (BWAQ), UCLA Loneliness Scale, Barratt Impulsivity Scale (BIS), and Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS) were used to measure important characteristics in this study, which included 100 college students from Mumbai, ages 18 to 25. Significant positive relationships were found between binge-watching and social anxiety ($r = 0.487$, $p < 0.001$), impulsivity ($r = 0.424$, $p < 0.001$), and loneliness ($r = 0.304$, $p = 0.002$), according to statistical analysis. Furthermore, there was a positive correlation between loneliness and social anxiety and a negative correlation between impulsivity and social anxiety. These results draw attention to the possible negative effects of binge-watching on emotional and behavioral issues.

MORBID CONTENT:

9. Byrne (2018) carried out a study to investigate how demographic characteristics, particularly age and religiosity, affect morbid curiosity. The study used a snowball sampling technique to find 133 respondents using online surveys, using Zillman's idea of morbid interest as death rehearsal as a framework. The findings showed that morbid curiosity was significantly inversely correlated with age, with younger people showing a higher interest in morbid material. However, it was discovered that morbid curiosity was not significantly predicted by religiosity. The study emphasized the

possible psychological hazards—such as violence, introversion, and psychosis—that come with morbid curiosity, especially in young people. To further evaluate the influence of religiosity, the researcher recommended future research using random sampling and acknowledged limits in sample representativeness.

10. Scrivner (2022) examines morbid curiosity, a cognitive function that has evolved for predator management and is magnified in humans only through imagination. By relating morbid curiosity to the paradox of horror—our pleasure in frightful entertainment—the dissertation lays a theoretical basis for it. The Morbid Curiosity Scale, which measures individual differences in the propensity to seek out dangerous information, is developed and validated by Scrivner through a series of research. Additionally, the study looks at how psychological resilience and information-gathering habits are impacted by morbid curiosity during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study provides insightful information about the adaptive roles of morbid curiosity and how it affects human behavior and thought.

11. Fox, Rebecca (2013) uses Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to examine the psychological reasons and impacts of accessing factual, morbid content online (IPA). The study finds important themes pertaining to fascination with blood, gore, injury, and death through qualitative analysis of eight subjects (three females and five males) from different parts of the world. The results show both favorable and unfavorable psychological effects, and individuals show a strong desire for such information. This study emphasizes the need for additional research into the effects of continuous exposure to real-life horrific imagery, even though other studies have concentrated on fictional morbid content. The study offers a preliminary framework for comprehending the psychological allure and consequences of ingesting real, morbid stuff on the internet.

12. Scrivner (2021) investigates morbid curiosity as a prevalent psychological characteristic and creates the Morbid Curiosity Scale (MCS) to evaluate how different people are in their desire to learn more about risky situations. The research investigates the association between morbid curiosity and personality traits, its stability over time, and its impact on media preferences and decision-making across four investigations (N = 1,924). The results show that those with morbid curiosity are low in animal reminder disgust, rebellious, and socially curious. Morbid curiosity is also a major predictor of morbid information engagement. In addition to highlighting the importance of morbid curiosity in human information-seeking behavior, this study offers a validated psychometric method for measuring it.

13. Scrivner and Stubbersfield (2022) examine three studies to determine how morbid curiosity and conspiracy theories are related. Study 1 (n = 144) revealed that overall conspiracist attitudes were stronger among those with higher trait morbid curiosity. Study 2 showed that conspiracy theories were seen as more dangerous by morbidly curious people. According to Study 3, which used

a behavioral choice paradigm, participants were more inclined to choose conspiratorial interpretations for occurrences if they decided to investigate morbid stimuli. In every study, the best indicator of conspiratorial ideation was curiosity about the thoughts of dangerous individuals. The results imply that the development of conspiracy theory ideas is significantly influenced by morbid curiosity, a factor that has not been thoroughly studied.

14. Sanders (2023) investigates the reasons underlying morbid curiosity and how it affects how people consume media, especially horror movies. An online survey measuring morbid curiosity (Scrivner, 2021), enjoyment of horror films (Sparks, 1986), viewing reasons (Johnston, 1995), horror typology (Robinson et al., 2014), and fear about crime (Jackson, 2009) was administered to 52 participants. To investigate variations in morbid curiosity among personality subtypes and to find associations between morbid curiosity and viewing behaviors, statistical analyses were conducted using ANOVA and Pearson's correlations. The findings showed that there were no appreciable variations in the degrees of morbid curiosity among investigators, white-knucklers, and adrenaline addicts. Morbid curiosity and thrill-seeking activities, such as watching horror movies for adrenaline rushes ($r = .37$, $p = .006$) and solving problems ($r = .41$, $p = .002$), however, showed significant connections. Additionally, morbidly curious people were more likely to like watching horror alone ($r = -.31$, $p = .034$), experience less terror after viewing ($r = -.33$, $p = .023$), and interact with horror media more frequently ($r = .41$, $p = .002$). According to the results, morbid curiosity is a complicated characteristic that affects media preferences and affective reactions, offering insights into its psychological importance.

15. Javed (2024) uses a mixed-methods approach to investigate the connection between young adults' empathy and morbid media consumption in Pakistan. The study investigated the effects of exposure to true crime, horror movies, and related content on emotional reactions through three focus groups and surveys completed by 165 participants (aged 18 to 25). While anecdotal research indicated a complex effect ranging from increased sensitivity to desensitization, quantitative results indicated a negligible negative connection between morbid media intake and empathy. Thematic analysis brought to light how contextual elements and individual experiences shape these impacts. The study highlights the intricacy of the relationship between empathy and morbid curiosity and urges more extensive, varied investigation.

16. Zuckerman and Litle (1986) examined the connections between curiosity for morbid and sexual occurrences in media and live sports, personality factors (extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism), and sensation seeking. The study polled 213 female and 89 male undergraduates using self-reported attendance at X-rated and scary movies and newly created interest scores. The findings indicated that men outperformed women in the areas of psychoticism, sensation seeking, movie attendance, and morbid and sexual curiosity. The idea that high sensation seekers are attracted to

stimuli that activate central catecholamine systems is supported by the positive correlations found between sensation seeking and psychoticism and curiosity as well as movie attendance. The results are consistent with earlier studies that found a correlation between elevated peripheral catecholamine activity and violent, sexual, and fear-inducing films.

17. Fathima Najiya (2023), In view of the rising number of violent crime cases in Kerala, the author of the study "Relationship Between Morbid Curiosity and Potential Predatory Violence Among Young Adults in Kerala," investigates the connection between morbid curiosity and predatory violence. The study looks into how widespread media coverage and the public's obsession with horrible crimes fuel morbid curiosity and aggressive impulses. This study used the Potential Predatory Violence Indicator-13 (PPVI-13; Penagos-Corzo et al., 2019) and the Morbid Curiosity Scale (Scrivner, 2021) on a sample of 50 young adults. The psychological elements behind morbid curiosity and hostility were revealed by data analysis using SPSS, which included descriptive statistics, the Mann-Whitney U test, and Spearman correlation. The empirical literature in the topic is enlarged by this study, which also provides a foundation for further investigation and interventions.

18. Mor, K., Kumar, A., Seema, & Saini, G. (2021) studied the effects of income groups on exploratory consumer proclivities in the Indian retail sector in a paper titled "Studying Curiosity Motivated Behavior, Variety Seeking Behavior and Risk-Taking Behavior: A Breakthrough in Consumer Psychology." A sample of 923 urban individuals from New Delhi were used in the study, which examined behaviors related to convenience items, including risk-taking, brand switching, innovativeness, and information-seeking. Higher- income customers show more risk-taking and innovative tendencies, whereas lower- income consumers show more exploration and information-seeking tendencies, according to the study's findings from independent sample t-tests and one-way ANOVA. The results have ramifications for both academic research and marketing initiatives, delivering insightful information about consumer behavior in emerging markets.

EMOTIONAL REGULATION:

19. Gouveia, V. V., Moura, H. M. D., Oliveira, I. C. V. D., Ribeiro, M. G. C., Rezende, A. T., & Brito, T. R. D. S. (2018) undertook a study entitled "Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ): Evidence of Construct Validity and Internal Consistency" in order to assess the ERQ's psychometric robustness among Brazilian teenagers. Phases of the study were exploratory and confirmatory, and 441 students (54.6% female; M age = 16 years) took part. With appropriate Cronbach's alpha values (.67, .63, and .64, respectively), exploratory factor analysis identified a three-factor model—Cognitive Reappraisal, Redirection of Attentional Focus, and Emotional Suppression—that accounted for 59.3% of the variance. Confirmatory factor analysis provided strong model fit indices (e.g., RMSEA = .08, CFI = .88) to support the structure. Additional support for convergent validity was provided by AVE and Composite Reliability computations. The results validate the ERQ's construct validity and

internal consistency, which make it a valid instrument for evaluating adolescents' emotional regulation.

20. Lavanya, T. P., & Manjula, M. (2017) conducted an exploratory study titled "Emotion Regulation and Psychological Problems Among Indian College Youth" to investigate the relationship between emotion management strategies and psychological issues in young people. The study comprised 419 college students, split into two age groups: older adolescents (16–17 years old) and young adults (18–25 years old). The study discovered that participants mostly employed positive emotion regulation strategies like planning and positive refocusing, as measured by the Youth Self-Report/Young Adult Self-Report (YSR/YASR) and the Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ). However, there was a distinct age-related pattern that demonstrated that as people aged, psychological problems and the use of unhealthy coping strategies rose. Women were more likely to suffer from anxiety-related problems, whereas men showed more conduct concerns. The study highlights the importance of understanding emotion regulation patterns and the potential for targeted therapies for college-aged children in terms of mental health.

21. Starosta, J., Izydorczyk, B., Sitnik-Warchulska, K., & Lizińczyk, S. (2021) The study, "Impulsivity and Difficulties in Emotional Regulation as Predictors of Binge- Watching Behaviours," was found and published in *Frontiers in Psychiatry*. The purpose of the study was to investigate the ways in which viewing incentives, emotional control issues, and impulsive qualities relate to problematic binge-watching in young Polish people. The authors evaluated 645 people, ages 18 to 30, using proven psychometric instruments such the Questionnaire of Excessive Binge-Watching, the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale, and the UPPS-P Impulsive Behavior Scale. Problematic binge-watching was substantially predicted by escapist intentions, poor impulse control, and lack of premeditation, according to regression analyses. The study highlights the psychological elements that contribute to excessive viewing behavior and offers empirical evidence of the relationship between young people's media consumption patterns and emotional regulation.

22. Maity, A., & Sahai, A. (2018) conducted the study "Emotional Regulation & Optimism as Predictors of Self-Efficacy among Young Adults in India" was to investigate the relationship between self-efficacy and optimism in young adults. Using purposive sampling, 117 college students (ages 18 to 26) from private institutions in the Delhi NCR area were chosen for the sample. Standardized instruments such as the General Self- Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem), the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (John & Gross), and the Life Orientation Test-Revised (Carver) were employed. The results showed that optimism and emotional control were important predictors of self-efficacy. Cognitive reappraisal was shown to be favorably correlated with expressive suppression, whereas optimism was found to be negatively correlated with expressive suppression. There was no discernible relationship between optimism and cognitive reappraisal.

23. Mathew, M., & Priyanka, V. R. (2023) undertook a study to investigate the connection between emotional control and interpersonal sensitivity in young adults living in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka who are between the ages of 18 and 28. The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire and the Interpersonal Sensitivity Scale are two standardized psychometric instruments that the researchers used to gather information from a purposive sample of 140 participants. Data analysis using SPSS applying regression, correlation, and descriptive statistics revealed significant correlations between the subscales of both constructs. It's interesting to note that cognitive reappraisal was strongly associated with fragile inner self, whereas expressive suppression was strongly associated with shyness, interpersonal awareness, and fragile inner self. The findings indicate that people's perceptions of social interactions and their emotional regulation skills are dynamically related, and that emotional regulation significantly influences interpersonal sensitive traits like shyness and alertness.

24. Kant, R., & Soni, S. (2024) investigated how cognitive emotional control techniques affect emotional reactivity in Indian young adults with varied anxiety levels, ages 18 to 30, in a study titled The Interplay of Cognitive Emotional control, Emotional Reactivity, and Anxiety in Young Adults. 128 participants (64 men and 64 women) were chosen at random to evaluate the connections between anxiety, reactivity, and emotional control techniques. The results showed that adaptive cognitive emotion control techniques had a low, negligible negative connection with anxiety and a large positive link with overall positive emotional reactivity. On the other hand, anxiety and overall negative reactivity showed a substantial positive correlation with maladaptive regulatory techniques. Furthermore, there was a strong positive association between anxiety and general negative reactivity, but not between anxiety and general positive reactivity. Additionally, gender-based differences were noted: the utilization of adaptive regulatory methods and the degree of negative emotional response varied considerably between males and females. Anxiety levels did not, however, differ significantly by gender. The significance of customizing emotional regulation interventions to individual profiles, including gender differences, is underscored by these findings, which show the intricate link among anxiety, emotional response patterns, and regulation strategies.

25. Spataro, P., Messina, I., Saraulli, D., & Longobardi, E. (2025) investigated the connection between mindful attention awareness (MAA) and binge-watching (BW) behavior in a study titled Mindful Attention Awareness Reduces Binge Watching Engagement: The Mediating Role of Emotion Regulation Difficulties. An online survey measuring BW engagement and symptoms, emotion control issues, and MAA was filled up by 442 persons. Both the positive and negative features of binge-watching were found to be adversely correlated with MAA. Path analysis also revealed that better access to emotion regulation techniques, heightened emotional awareness, and less difficulty with impulse control acted as mediators in this association. By improving emotion

regulation skills, these findings demonstrate the protective function of mindfulness in reducing problematic BW behaviors. This suggests that mindfulness-based therapies could be useful in treating binge-watching tendencies associated with emotional dysregulation.

26. Yen, J. Y., Yeh, Y. C., Wang, P. W., Liu, T. L., Chen, Y. Y., & Ko, C. H. (2018) carried out research to assess emotional regulation in young adults with Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD) and its correlation with aggression, loneliness, and anxiety. Using stringent inclusion and exclusion criteria, the study comprised 87 participants with IGD and a matched control group of 87 participants without IGD. On standardized tests, participants answered questions about sadness, anxiety, hostility, and emotional management techniques (cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression).

The findings showed that, in comparison to controls, people with IGD employed more expressive suppression and less cognitive reappraisal. Furthermore, lower levels of anxiety, despair, and aggression were linked to greater use of cognitive reappraisal and less use of suppression. The results highlight the significance of including emotional regulation therapies into therapeutic treatment for this population and imply that emotional control techniques may be a contributing factor to the emotional challenges faced by people with IGD.

27. Prakash, R. S., Whitmoyer, P., Aldao, A., & Schirda, B. (2015) explored the relationship between dispositional mindfulness and emotion regulation across different age groups. The study aimed to investigate whether the use of specific emotion regulation strategies—cognitive reappraisal, experiential suppression, and thought avoidance—mediated the association between mindfulness and emotion dysregulation. Using self-report measures, data were collected from 50 young adults and 50 older adults. The findings revealed that thought avoidance, but not reappraisal or suppression, partially mediated the relationship between mindfulness and emotion dysregulation. Furthermore, age moderated this mediation, with younger adults demonstrating a stronger link between lower mindfulness, greater thought avoidance, and higher emotion dysregulation. The study highlights the significance of reducing cognitive avoidance as a mechanism through which mindfulness enhances emotional regulation, particularly among young adults.

28. Ghosh, S., & Halder, S. (2020) carried out a study to investigate the connection between young adults' emotional control and cognitive flexibility. The study highlighted how maladaptive emotion control techniques can lead to psychological suffering, acknowledging that young adulthood is a time of emotional and cognitive hurdles. Using neuropsychological tests and the Emotional Regulation Questionnaire, the researchers looked at a group of thirty young adults between the ages of 18 and 25. The results showed that cognitive flexibility and emotional regulation were significantly correlated, and that individuals preferred utilizing cognitive reappraisal as their main regulation technique. According to the findings, cognitive flexibility is essential for promoting healthy emotional control in young adulthood.

METHODOLOGY:

The primary aim of this research was to investigate the relationship between binge-watching morbid content and emotional regulation among young adults, with a particular focus on the role of morbid curiosity.

Objectives - To examine the association between binge-watching behaviors and emotional regulation.

- To assess the predictive role of morbid curiosity on emotional regulation capacities.
- To determine whether problematic series watching negatively affects emotional regulation skills.

Hypotheses Based on existing literature and the research objectives, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. There will be a significant relationship between binge-watching morbid content and emotional regulation among young adults.
2. Higher morbid curiosity levels will positively predict better emotional regulation abilities.
3. Problematic binge-watching behaviors will negatively predict emotional regulation capacities.

Research Design This study utilized a **quantitative correlational research design**.

The choice of this design was appropriate as it allowed for the examination of the strength and direction of associations between variables — namely, binge-watching behaviors, morbid curiosity, and emotional regulation — without manipulation or experimental control.

Correlational designs are commonly employed in psychological research when experimental approaches are either impractical or unethical.

Participants and Sampling Technique The study sample comprised 100 young adults aged between 18 and 30 years. Purposive sampling was adopted to ensure the inclusion of participants who met specific criteria: Regular engagement with television/web/video series and history of binge-watching behavior within the past three months.

Participants were recruited through online platforms, including university networks, college groups, and social media forums, predominantly from urban environments.

Demographic information such as age, gender, education level, and screen-time habits was also collected for descriptive analysis.

Instruments The study utilized three validated psychometric instruments to measure the key constructs:

1. Problematic Series Watching Scale (PSWS)

Developed by Orosz et al. (2016), the PSWS consists of 6 items measuring dimensions like salience, tolerance, mood modification, relapse, withdrawal, and conflict. Responses are recorded on a **5-point Likert scale** ranging from 1 ("Never") to 5 ("Always").

- **Reliability:** Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.76$. **Validity:** Confirmed through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), demonstrating strong construct validity.

2. Morbid Curiosity Scale (MCS)

The MCS assesses individuals' tendencies to seek out morbid content involving violence, existential threats, paranormal experiences, and body violations. It employs a **7-point Likert scale**.

- **Reliability:** Internal consistency coefficients range from 0.80 to 0.89 across subscales.
- **Validity:** Demonstrated through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses.

2. Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ)

Designed by Gross and John (2003) and validated further by Gouveia et al. (2018), the ERQ measures two emotion regulation strategies: **Cognitive Reappraisal** and **Expressive Suppression** through 10 items on a **7-point Likert scale**.

- **Reliability:** Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.76$ for Reappraisal, and 0.73 for Suppression.
- **Validity:** Demonstrated excellent construct and criterion-related validity across diverse populations.

All selected instruments had established psychometric properties, were concise, and suited the study's target demographic.

Data Collection Procedure:

Data were gathered through a **Google Form survey** that consolidated the demographic questionnaire and the three psychometric instruments.

Participants provided **informed consent digitally** before accessing the survey. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured throughout.

The data collection process spanned approximately **two weeks**.

Participants were encouraged to respond candidly and were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without consequences.

Attention-check items were embedded within the survey to ensure data quality and reliability.

Data Analysis:

The collected data were analyzed using **IBM SPSS Version 25**. The following statistical techniques were employed:

- **Descriptive statistics** (means, standard deviations, and frequencies) were computed to summarize demographic and study variables.
- **Pearson correlation analysis** was used to assess relationships between binge-watching behaviors, morbid curiosity, and emotional regulation.
- **Multiple regression analysis** was conducted to evaluate the predictive capacity of morbid curiosity and problematic binge-watching on emotional regulation scores.

- **Assumption checks** (normality, linearity, multicollinearity, homoscedasticity) were performed to validate the appropriateness of the analyses.

This analytical framework provided a comprehensive examination of the study's hypotheses and research questions.

RESULTS:

This chapter presents the results of the analyses conducted to examine the relationship between binge-watching morbid content, morbid curiosity, and emotional regulation among young adults. The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS software, employing descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis.

Descriptive Statistics:

Descriptive statistics were conducted for all variables. The Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) had a mean score of 45.13 (SD = 13.54), the Morbid Curiosity Scale (MCS) had a mean of 86.47 (SD = 37.19), and the Problematic Series Watching Scale (PSWS) had a mean of 13.59 (SD = 5.07). All variables were checked for missing data, and analyses were conducted using listwise deletion, resulting in a sample size of 100.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	N
Emotional Regulation (ERQ)	45.13	13.54	100
Morbid Curiosity (MCS)	86.47	37.19	100
Problematic Series Watching (PSWS)	13.59	5.07	100

Note. SD = Standard Deviation.

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between emotional regulation (ERQ), morbid curiosity (MCS), and binge-watching behavior (PSWS).

- Emotional Regulation showed a significant positive correlation with Morbid Curiosity ($r = .349$, $p < .001$), suggesting that individuals with higher morbid curiosity reported better emotional regulation.
- Emotional Regulation and Binge-Watching were not significantly correlated ($r = .046$, $p = .325$), indicating that binge-watching behavior may not be directly related to emotional regulation.
- MCS and PSWS showed a moderate positive correlation ($r = .356$, $p < .001$), suggesting some overlap in individuals who score high on morbid curiosity and binge-watching tendencies.

Table 2: Pearson Correlations between Study Variables

Variable	ERQ	MCS	PSWS
ERQ	1.00	.349**	.046
MCS	.349**	1.00	.356**
PSWS	.046	.356**	1.00

Note: ** $p < .001$

Multiple Regression Analysis:

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine whether morbid curiosity and problematic series watching predict emotional regulation. The results revealed that the overall model was statistically significant, $F(2, 97) = 7.177$, $p = .001$, and accounted for approximately 12.9% of the variance in emotional regulation ($R^2 = .129$).

Morbid curiosity was a significant positive predictor of emotional regulation ($\beta = .381$, $p < .001$), suggesting that individuals who score higher in morbid curiosity tend to have better emotional regulation skills. On the other hand, problematic binge-watching was not a significant predictor ($\beta = -.090$, $p = .379$).

Table 3: Multiple Regression Predicting Emotional Regulation (ERQ)

Predictor Variable	B	(β)	t-value	(p)	Interpretation
Morbid Curiosity (MCS)	0.139	0.381	3.758	.000	Significant positive predictor
Binge-Watching (PSWS)	-0.239	-0.090	-0.883	.379	Not significant

Model Summary: $R = .359$, $R^2 = .129$, $F(2, 97) = 7.177$, $p = .001$.

Note. B = Unstandardized regression coefficient; β = Standardized beta coefficient.

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this study was to investigate how binge-watching morbid content affects emotional regulation among young adults, particularly focusing on the roles of morbid curiosity and problematic binge-watching behaviors. With a quantitative approach, using a sample of 100 participants and IBM SPSS software, the study offered important insights into how exposure to dark media influences emotional processes. The results indicated a **positive, significant relationship between morbid curiosity and emotional regulation**. Young adults with higher levels of morbid curiosity were better able to regulate their emotions, specifically through cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression strategies. In contrast, problematic binge-watching behaviors did not significantly predict emotional regulation outcomes.

Summary of Key Findings:

The findings revealed a **positive and significant relationship between morbid curiosity and emotional regulation** among young adults. Specifically, higher levels of morbid curiosity predicted better emotional regulation capacities, particularly in the domains of cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. Conversely, problematic binge-watching behaviors did not show a significant prediction of emotional regulation abilities. These results provide important contributions to understanding the nuanced role of morbid content consumption and challenge simplistic notions that all exposure to disturbing media is inherently harmful. This finding suggests that individuals who engage with morbid content out of curiosity may develop healthier emotional coping mechanisms. As Scrivner (2021) and Byrne (2018) note, morbid curiosity can encourage emotional exploration rather than avoidance, building resilience over time. It aligns with Oosterwijk et al. (2017), who showed that people often choose emotionally challenging content intentionally to experience complex emotions. Emotional regulation theories, such as those proposed by Gross (1998) and supported by Aldao et al. (2010), explain how actively engaging with emotional stimuli strengthens cognitive reappraisal skills, which helps individuals manage distress more effectively. In contrast, problematic binge-watching appeared more connected to escapism and poor time management, rather than directly harming emotional regulation, supporting findings by Starosta et al. (2021) and Siraj & PG (2023).

Comparison with Previous Literature:

The findings align with several previous research studies that suggest that exposure to negative content, when approached voluntarily and with curiosity, can lead to improved emotional coping and resilience:

- Scrivner (2021) found that individuals high in morbid curiosity exhibited greater tolerance for negative emotions and were less likely to engage in emotional avoidance.
- Oosterwijk et al. (2017) demonstrated that individuals often "choose" negative stimuli

intentionally, driven by a desire to experience complex emotions and deepen their emotional understanding.

- Byrne (2018) similarly argued that fascination with death-related imagery in young adults is associated with greater emotional processing and maturity.
- Sanders (2023) emphasized that morbidly curious individuals are motivated not merely by thrill-seeking but by a deeper need to comprehend human suffering, thus enhancing emotional flexibility.
- Fox (2013) found that online fascination with violent imagery was not necessarily associated with pathology, but with a deeper psychological drive to understand mortality.
- Aldao et al. (2010) concluded that emotional regulation strategies such as cognitive reappraisal are protective across various psychopathological outcomes, supporting the idea that skills gained through emotional engagement have broad adaptive value.

Thus, the positive correlation observed in this study between morbid curiosity and emotional regulation is not only statistically significant but also strongly supported by existing theoretical and empirical frameworks.

Conversely, the non-significant finding regarding problematic binge-watching behavior mirrors previous work suggesting that the problematic aspect of binge-watching is more closely tied to time management issues, procrastination, and escapism (Starosta et al., 2021; Nourin Siraj & PG, 2023), rather than to direct deficits in emotional regulation capacities.

Implications of the Findings:

The results of this study carry important psychological and societal implications:

- For Mental Health: Understanding morbid curiosity as an adaptive trait can reshape interventions. Instead of pathologizing fascination with morbid media, psychologists can leverage this curiosity to foster healthier emotional processing strategies.
- For Media Literacy: Educational programs can emphasize how intentional, mindful engagement with negative media — rather than passive, compulsive binge-watching — can build emotional resilience.
- For Young Adults: Recognizing the potential adaptive benefits of morbid curiosity can help young adults understand their own media behaviors without stigma and develop better emotional self-awareness. These results underline an important distinction: **the motivation behind binge-watching matters**. Choosing morbid content out of curiosity may enhance emotional adaptability, while compulsive viewing behaviors tied to avoidance could still pose risks for other areas of psychological health.

Limitations of the Study:

Despite its contributions, this research is not without limitations:

- **Cross-sectional Design:** As the data were collected at one point in time, causal relationships cannot be firmly established.
- **Self-report Measures:** The reliance on self-reported questionnaires may introduce bias, including social desirability effects.
- **Sample Specificity:** The sample was limited to young adults aged 18–30, predominantly university students, restricting generalizability to broader populations.
- **Content Specificity:** The study did not differentiate between various types of morbid content (e.g., fictional horror vs. real crime documentaries), which might have distinct psychological impacts.

CONCLUSION:

The present study set out to explore how binge-watching morbid content impacts emotional regulation among young adults, focusing on the predictive roles of morbid curiosity and problematic binge-watching behaviors. The findings offer important insights into the emotional dynamics of modern media engagement. Consistent with existing theoretical frameworks, the results demonstrated that morbid curiosity is **positively associated with emotional regulation abilities**. Individuals who actively seek out morbid or unsettling content, driven by curiosity, appear better equipped to manage their emotional responses through cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. This reinforces the perspective that morbid curiosity, far from being pathological, can serve adaptive emotional functions (Scrivner, 2021; Oosterwijk et al., 2017). Conversely, problematic binge-watching behaviors did not significantly predict emotional regulation outcomes, suggesting that the problematic aspects of binge-watching are more behavioral (e.g., impulsivity, procrastination) rather than emotional in nature (Starosta et al., 2021; Nourin Siraj & PG, 2023). The findings underscore the importance of **emotional engagement** in media consumption and challenge simplistic narratives that associate morbid content exposure with psychological harm. By highlighting the potentially adaptive roles of morbid curiosity, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of emotional regulation processes among young adults. While the study presents valuable insights, future research is needed to confirm these findings across different populations and content types.

Further exploration into moderating factors, such as empathy and resilience, would also enhance understanding of how media consumption interacts with emotional well-being. In conclusion, this research highlights that the way individuals engage with emotionally intense content — rather than the content itself — is crucial in shaping emotional outcomes. Mindful and curious engagement with challenging media may, paradoxically, enhance emotional regulation capacities, offering a new perspective for both psychological theory and practice.

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