

Binging the Loneliness Away? A Study on Streaming Habits and Loneliness Levels of Emerging Adults in Portugal

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Abstract

The technological advances of the 21st century have changed audiences' media consumption habits. Audiences are no longer tied to schedules and breaks like on traditional television but can now have access to entire series in one sitting which can lead to compulsive audiovisual consumption, known as binge-watching. This research aims to understand whether there is a relationship between the levels of loneliness of Portuguese emerging adults and the practice of compulsive streaming consumption. It is a quantitative study, with

an $N = 337$ aged 18 to 30 and uses a questionnaire to collect data for statistical analysis.

Results show that there is a very significant relationship between the amount of time young people spend streaming and their levels of loneliness, and a very significant relationship between participant's levels of loneliness and recurrent binge-watching behavior, also higher levels of loneliness are associated with compulsive consumption of audiovisual content via streaming platforms.

Keywords: binge-watching, streaming, audiovisual content, loneliness, emerging adults, young people.

Binging the Loneliness Away? Um Estudo Sobre os Hábitos de Streaming e os Níveis de Solidão dos Adultos Emergentes em Portugal

Resumo

Os avanços tecnológicos do século XXI alteraram os hábitos de consumo das audiências. As audiências já não estão pressas a horários e intervalos como era o caso na televisão tradicional, mas podem agora ter acesso a series inteiras de uma vez o que pode levar a um consumo audiovisual compulsivo, conhecido como binge-watching.

Este estudo pretende compreender se existe uma relação entre os níveis de solidão dos adultos emergentes em Portugal e a prática de consumo de streaming compulsivo. Trata-se de um estudo quantitativo, com uma

amostra $N=337$ com idades compreendidas entre 18 e 30 e usa um questionário para recolher dados para análise estatística.

Os resultados demonstram que existe uma relação muito significativa entre o tempo que os jovens passam a fazer streaming e os seus níveis de solidão, e uma relação muito significativa entre os níveis de solidão do participante e comportamento de binge-watching recorrente, também grandes níveis de solidão estão associados ao consumo compulsivo de conteúdos audiovisuais através de plataformas de streaming.

Palavras-Chave: binge-watching, streaming, conteúdo audiovisual, solidão, adultos emergentes, jovens.

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1. Introduction

Audiences' audiovisual consumption patterns have changed significantly with the development of streaming platforms, transforming the experience of consuming series and films from a collective experience to a more individualized one (Özgün & Treske, 2021). What was once a shared and familiar experience of watching television has become a personal activity, as streaming platforms allow individuals to choose content based on their personal tastes and allow great flexibility regarding when, where and for how long they stream. These streaming platforms create ideal conditions for compulsive consumption of audiovisual content, known as binge-watching (Steiner & Xu, 2020). Young audiences, which have already grown with the presence of streaming platforms, choose these for their consumption of series and films, abandoning traditional television (Podara et al., 2021), which may raise questions regarding this generation's vulnerability to compulsive consumption of audiovisual content through streaming platforms.

The issue of compulsive consumption of streaming, binge-watching, is relevant in the study of youth's mental health, since young people are more susceptible to addictive internet consumption and this tendency towards addictive behaviors is associated with greater feelings of loneliness (Savolainen et al., 2020). Loneliness is something transversal and individuals are susceptible to feeling lonely at different stages of life (Hofman et al., 2022); however, youth is a stage where individuals may be more prone to feeling alone due to major changes in their lives, such as progressing from the educational phase to entering higher education or the job market (Diehl et al., 2018). Therefore, it is of interest to understand how an age group vulnerable to both compulsive consumption and loneliness, relate to these two phenomena.

This study aims to analyze whether there is a relationship between loneliness and the practice of compulsive streaming consumption (i.e., binge-watching) among the generation of emerging adults (18 to 30 years old) living in Portugal. This research is organized into four chapters: A Theoretical Framework, Methodology, Results & Discussion and Conclusion & Future Research. It is expected that the results of this research will contribute to understanding the problem of binge-watching, especially its relationship with the mental health of the Portuguese youth after the pandemic period. Based on these results, new research directions and possible study topics are also presented to further analyze this phenomenon.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Technological breakthroughs and streaming platforms as the new preferred alternative for audiences

Technological innovations in recent decades have significantly altered daily lives of individuals, especially the Internet has become an integral part of the quotidian, impacting the way we communicate, work, shop, and so on (Moretta & Buodo, 2020). These technological innovations have also changed audiences' entertainment content consumption habits (Tefertiller & Maxwell, 2023), mainly their TV-watching patterns (Sung et al., 2018). The technological advances that have led to the proliferation of streaming platforms have not only changed the television industry, but also the way people watch TV (Ferchaud & Proffitt, 2023).

Online streaming services have positioned themselves as the easiest and most convenient way to watch audiovisual content (Liza et al., 2023) and platforms such as Netflix, YouTube and Amazon Prime are the biggest competitors to traditional television (Qayyoun & Malik, 2023). The way of consuming video content has changed significantly, because while when viewing traditional television audiences had to wait for new episodes to be released, respect the established schedules and commercial breaks,

with the new streaming platforms it is possible to view the content you want, when and where you want it (Vorderer, P., and Klimmt, 2021). This allowed audiences to have total control over their viewing schedules (Viens & Farrar, 2021). In addition to the experience of having a variety of content available, streaming platforms use data to understand their audience and offer a personalized experience, suggesting content that interests them and anticipating their choices (Burroughs, 2019; Lüders et al., 2021). As a result, streaming has become a default format for audiovisual consumption (Lüders et al., 2021).

This type of audiovisual content viewing is widely used by younger generations, who have already grown-up with access to streaming platforms, making them more vulnerable to them compared to older generations (Qayyoun & Malik, 2023). These new generations, associated to a “new media generation”, are the target of new strategies and practices for disseminating audiovisual content considering these preferences (Sundet & Lüders, 2023).

2.2. Binge-watching, a concept

The new technological advances of streaming platforms have allowed the phenomenon of binge-watching to proliferate (Sun & Chang, 2021) which can take place on various technological devices (Sung et al., 2018), and it is a growing problem in different countries and cultures (Flayelle et al., 2020). The practice of making entire seasons available at once has also been a major contributor to the spread of this occurrence. Binge-watching behavior is understood as watching multiple contents (series and films) in one sitting (Flayelle et al., 2019). This is often associated with watching three or more episodes in a row (Favieri et al., 2023). In general, academics take into consideration the number of episodes viewed, the frequency of the practice and the content being viewed when analyzing binge-watching (Starosta, 2020).

The motivations for binge-watching are entertainment, enthusiasm, and escapism (Qayyoun & Malik, 2023; Shim & Kim, 2018) as well as to pass the time, and instant gratification (Starosta, 2020). Binge-watching can also serve as an emotion-focused coping strategy, to ignore negative feelings and “escape reality” (Sun & Chang, 2021), which is in line with the Uses and Gratification Theory, that is, individuals may turn to media consumption to satisfy psychological needs (Alimoradi et al., 2022). Escaping through media consumption allows audiences to perceive the world bigger than their own experiences, and the platforms themselves suggest and direct users to new content and themes (Jones et al., 2018). Binge-watching, according to (Merrill & Rubenking, 2019), is also used as a reward or as a way of procrastinating, which is a consequence of individuals’ low capacity for self-regulation, making it more difficult to complete tasks and stay focused.

This practice is characterized by being an immersive experience of interaction with the content (Sung et al., 2018), and it is a practice that becomes automatic for people (Rubenking & Bracken, 2018). This means that individuals with a lower capacity for self-control are more attracted to binge-watching (Tefertiller & Maxwell, 2023). According to the study by (Sung et al., 2018) the more episodes are consumed in binge-watching session, the more time individuals spend binge-watching, the greater the frequency of this practice and the more individuals engage with the programs viewed. However, it is necessary to understand that excess is not necessarily something outside the norm, but is very much part of the habits of consumption of digital elements and promoted by them (Lopes, 2020).

2.3. On Loneliness

Perlman & Peplau (2008) conceptualize loneliness as an unpleasant experience that occurs when there is a deficiency in a person’s individual relationships and their needs are not met. The authors highlight three points to consider when understanding the phenomenon: (i) loneliness stems from a

deficiency in individual relationships, (ii) loneliness is a subjective concept and (iii) loneliness is something stressful and unpleasant. Thus, loneliness is a strong feeling of disconnection from others, even when someone is surrounded by other people (Alam et al., 2024). There are also several dimensions of loneliness: emotional loneliness (the lack of a close emotional figure); social loneliness (the lack of a social network and quality friendships) (Buecker et al., 2020) and existential loneliness (a deeper form of loneliness, a feeling of profound disconnection and negative emotions) (McKenna-Plumley et al., 2023). Different types of loneliness differ in risk factors (Hofman et al., 2022). However, loneliness can not only affect individuals' psychological states but also pose threats to their physical and mental states (Pourriyahi et al., 2021). According to the study by (Barreto et al., 2021) factors that can accentuate loneliness can be age, gender and culture. According to the research, it is younger individuals and males who tend to have higher levels of loneliness.

Feeling lonely tends to be more present in young people (Lau et al., 2021). The study by (Lay-Yee et al., 2022) states that levels of loneliness tend to be high during youth (18-30), fall in adulthood and rise again in senior citizens. It is common for young people to experience transient loneliness (Rezaei & Saghazadeh, 2022) since the transitions present at this stage of life, such as educational transitions, can be challenging for young people (Sundqvist et al., 2024), such as the transition to university (Shovestul et al., 2020). Even existential loneliness at this stage of life is associated with the experience of social exclusion and the feeling of not belonging (Garnow et al., 2022). In line with the study by (Diehl et al., 2018) regarding emotional loneliness vs. social loneliness during the university years, emotional loneliness is more frequent at this stage and being in a committed relationship or being married are factors that protect against emotional loneliness.

The isolation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has affected adolescents and young people, leading to increased social isolation. Young people who already had a tendency to feel lonely before Covid-19 have felt even more alone during the pandemic (Hemberg et al., 2024). Loneliness and isolation were topics of discussion among young people and parents during the lockdown because, although the youngsters found it easy to stay digitally connected with their friends, they lost the wider sense of their communities (Siva, 2020). In addition to loneliness, FOMO - fear of missing out - was also a frequent feeling, as young people felt they were being left out and missing moments of their own lives (Groarke et al., 2024). Despite indications that levels of loneliness have increased during the pandemic, there are indications that, progressively, after the lockdown, levels of loneliness have been falling back to pre-pandemic levels (Kung et al., 2023). However, it is still difficult to fully understand how confinement has affected individuals, just as it has the new generations.

2.4. The adverse outcomes of binge-watching

In the isolation period, a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, there was an increase in the practice of binge-watching. During this phase people dedicated more time to watching series (Boursier et al., 2021) since they were isolated, spending a lot of time at home, which created the ideal conditions for interacting in online activities and watching television (Dixit et al., 2020). So, at this stage, with more time on their hands and fewer opportunities for social interaction, individuals resorted to binge-watching, consuming a lot of video content in a row to entertain themselves, which led to an increased association between binge-watching and mental health problems (Alimoradi et al., 2022). Watching series was a way of fulfilling social needs and escaping the stressful environment of the pandemic; serving as a mechanism to escape stress and ignore the negative circumstances (Boursier et al., 2021). However, binge-watching can be a result of a poor adaptation to these difficult times as an emotional regulation strategy (Sigre-leirós et al., 2023).

Binge-watching tends to be an individual practice (Sung et al., 2018) and excessive binge-watching can be associated with addictive behaviors (Billaux et al., 2023; Flayelle et al., 2019; Starosta, 2020). Impulsiveness and depression can be tell-tale symptoms of binge-watching, with more impulsive people more vulnerable to losing control of their time spent streaming and neglecting their duties in order to continue binge-watching (Steins-Loeber et al., 2020). Negative effects connected with this excessive practice are obesity (Qayyoun & Malik, 2023), sleep deprivation (Alfonsi et al., 2023), stress, anxiety, depression, and loneliness (Alimoradi et al., 2022). The difficulty in dealing with stressful events in daily life is an incentive for individuals to resort to these addictive behaviors (Favieri et al., 2023). This behavior can lead to social consequences such as lack of productivity, procrastination, and neglecting others, as well as negative side effects such as fatigue, dizziness, excessive attachment to series, feeling empty, anxiety, stress, insomnia and loneliness. (Mahmoud & Wahab, 2021; Raza et al., 2021). In this sense, either binge-watching can be a way of escaping and abstracting from existing problems, or this compulsive consumption can be an antecedent to negative effects.

According to the study by (Gabbiadini et al., 2021) loneliness is presented as a determinant of binge-watching, as the practice is associated as a tool of escapism from loneliness, i.e., media escapism, as it allows a relationship to be established with fictional characters. Problematic internet use in general is also associated with loneliness, presenting itself as a cyclical problem because excessive use leads to fewer face-to-face interactions and, in turn, loneliness leads to compulsive internet use as a way of compensating for the lack of social connections. (Moretta & Buodo, 2020). The same problem could potentially also apply to the practice of compulsive streaming consumption, binge-watching.

3. Methodology

This study uses a quantitative approach, seeking to validate hypotheses through data and statistical analysis studying the relationship between variables in order to understand the interdependence of the phenomena under study (Mattar, 2015). This study is part of a larger investigation covering media consumption, loneliness and political participation with young people between the ages of 18 and 30 living in Portugal (Feio, 2022).

The study aims to answer the following research question: *Is there a relationship between levels of loneliness and binge-watching among young people in Portugal?* The following research objectives are defined:

- I. To understand whether there is a relationship between the levels of loneliness and the sociodemographic characteristics of young people.
- II. To analyze whether there is a relationship between the habit of streaming and the sociodemographic characteristics of young people.
- III. To check whether there is a relationship between levels of loneliness and compulsive consumption of streaming, i.e. binge-watching.
- IV. To study whether, when young people feel lonely or bored, they resort to streaming media content, and whether there is a relationship between this practice and their levels of loneliness.

The population of this research is young people living in Portugal between the ages of 18 and 30. This work adapts the concept of emerging adulthood from (Arnett, 2014) which consists of the conception that late adolescence and the 20s is a time when individuals are still in their formative years, being a time of transition to adulthood but not yet established as such. In the case of this study, (considering that the full study also covers political participation) the age range also includes 30 years old because several Portuguese youth parties include participants up to that age. The sample consists of 337 participants.

Data was collected through an online survey during April 2022, using non-probability sampling and a snowball sampling strategy. As a strategy to promote the survey, an online campaign was implemented through a promotional video aimed at the target population.

The variables analyzed in this research are the sociodemographic characteristics of the participants (age, sex, education, training area, professional situation), the time spent streaming daily and the participants' levels of loneliness, obtained through the UCLA Loneliness Scale, a questionnaire with twenty questions that generates a loneliness score between 20 (minimum value) and 80 (maximum value) points (Pontinen & Swails, 2017) adapted to Portuguese.

The data was processed using SPSS - Statistical Analysis Software 27 after being treated in Excel. The statistical tests used for the analysis were linear regression test and Mann-Whitney test.

4. Results & Discussion

4.1. Summary of sociodemographic characteristics

Considering the sociodemographic characteristics of the sample, it can be noted that the majority are female (66.8%) compared to male (32.3%), while only a small minority do not identify with either sex (0.9%). The age of the respondents is distributed as follows: between 18 and 20 (26.7%), 21 and 23 (44.5%), 24 and 26 (19.6%), 27 and 30 (9.2%). Most of the sample are students (59.1%), followed by workers (19%), student-workers (15.1%), self-employed (4.2%) and unemployed (2.7%).

4.2. Research objective I: Loneliness and young people

To address the first research objective, it was analyzed whether there were relationships between the young people's sociodemographic characteristics (age, sex, area of training, schooling and professional situation) and their level of loneliness.

Regression tests were conducted on the variables in question, revealing a significant relationship only between *average age* and the *level of loneliness of young people* (measured using the UCLA Loneliness Scale). No significant associations were found between *level of loneliness* and respondents' *sex*, *area of training*, *professional situation*, and *schooling*.

The results indicate that the *average age of the young people* is inversely related to their *level of loneliness* ($\beta_0 = 53.870$; $\beta_1 = -0.640$; $p\text{-value} = 0.008$), suggesting that as young people grow older, their loneliness levels tend to decrease. However, the adjusted r^2 value was low ($r^2 = 0.018$), meaning that age explains only a small proportion of loneliness variation. This suggests that other factors play a significant role, reinforcing the complexity of the phenomenon. Nevertheless, the statistical significance confirms a real relationship between age and loneliness.

The findings are in line with the literature since youth, the transition phase from adolescence to adulthood, is a challenging period in one's life. This is a stage of many expectations, where they face their first rejections, create their own world view and opinions, which can generate feelings of isolation and misunderstanding (Hamid & Lok, 2000). The fact that young people have higher levels of loneliness when they are younger (around 18 to 20 years old) and the rate of loneliness eases as they get older is in line with the work of Shovestul et al., (2020) and Sundqvist et al., (2024), who emphasize that the educational transition phase, entering and attending higher education, can be a more vulnerable phase for experiencing loneliness.

4.3. Research objective II: Streaming and Young People

The same procedure was used to verify whether there is any relationship between young people's sociodemographic data and their streaming habits. Linear regression tests were conducted, with the dependent variable being the *amount of time spent streaming daily*, and the variables: *age, gender, area of training, schooling, and professional status*. Only a significant relationship was detected between streaming and the *professional situation of young people*. While the r^2 was low ($r^2 \text{ adjusted} = 0.028$), there was a highly significant relationship between the variables ($\beta_0 = 1.870$; $\beta_1 = -0.229$; $p\text{-value} = 0.001$). The results indicate that as young people move through their professional lives, from student to employee, they spend less time streaming daily. This result is consistent with the literature, as binge-watching is often associated with younger individuals (Rubenking & Bracken, 2018), and that university students tend not only to binge-watch frequently, but also for longer periods of time (Merrill & Rubenking, 2019).

4.4. Research objective III - Loneliness and compulsive streaming consumption, i.e. binge-watching

The relationship between daily streaming consumption and the participants' levels of loneliness was analyzed. To this end, a linear regression test was carried out, with the dependent variable being *young people's loneliness scores* (obtained using the UCLA loneliness scale) related to the variable *daily time streaming*. The results indicate a very significant relationship between the time spent streaming daily and the level of loneliness of young people ($\beta_0 = 36.436$; $\beta_1 = -1.765$; $p\text{-value} = 0.006$). However, the adjusted r^2 is low ($r^2 \text{ adjusted} = 0.020$), indicating that only a small proportion of the variation in the level of loneliness of young people is explained by time spent streaming. The findings suggest that as young people spend more time streaming each day, their level of loneliness tends to increase. While the statistical significance confirms the existence of a relationship, the low r^2 highlights that other variables likely contribute to this phenomenon. It is important to emphasize that this result reflects a correlation, not a cause-effect relationship. These results are in line with the literature as according to (Sun & Chang, 2021), on the one hand, young people who are lonelier may stream more to cope with loneliness or, alternatively, the time invested in streaming limits the time available for face-to-face interactions with friends and family, which can deteriorate their interpersonal relationships.

After studying the relationship between loneliness and the consumption of streaming, loneliness was studied in relation to the compulsive behavior of streaming consumption, binge-watching. To do this, the streaming variable was transformed into a dichotomous variable, dividing a first group into non-compulsive consumption (up to two hours of daily streaming consumption) and a second group of binge-watching (three or more hours of daily streaming consumption). With this new variable, a linear regression test was carried out, keeping the level of loneliness as the dependent variable. The linear regression test between loneliness and binge-watching showed a highly significant result ($\beta_0 = 38.881$; $\beta_1 = -11.067$; $p\text{-value} = <0.001$) ($r^2 \text{ adjusted} = 0.036$). This illustrates a very significant relationship between the practice of binge-watching and the respondents' levels of loneliness, with young people who practice binge-watching showing higher levels of loneliness compared to young people who do not practice this compulsive behavior. These data are in line with previous studies, in which high levels of loneliness are associated with problematic technology use and binge-watching is associated with media escapism (Gabbiadini et al., 2021). Problematic binge-watching is associated with a higher risk of loneliness, depression, and social interaction anxiety (Sun & Chang, 2021). It should be emphasized that this result shows a correlation between the phenomena and not a cause-effect, however, according to (Tefertiller & Maxwell, 2018) study there is a suggestion that emotional states, such as loneliness, lead to binge-watching and not the other way around.

4.5. Research objective IV: Streaming consumption when bored or solitary and levels of loneliness

To study the fourth research objective, to understand whether when young people feel lonely or bored, they resort to streaming, and whether this practice is related to loneliness, a Mann-Whitney test was carried out. This test used the dichotomous variable *state of loneliness* divided into two groups, the least lonely (group with loneliness scores between 20 and 49) and the loneliest (group with loneliness scores between 50 and 80); and the variable *tends to stream when feeling lonely or bored* (with the indicators never, rarely, sometimes, often, always). The result of the test was not significant (p -value = 0.963), so we cannot assume a relationship between the *state of loneliness* and the *practice of streaming* when young people feel lonely or bored.

If we look descriptively at the results for the frequency of less lonely young people and loneliest young people streaming when they feel lonely or bored (figure 1), we can see that the percentage results are similar between the two groups. It should be noted that the most frequent result is that young people often resort to streaming in this situation, regardless of whether they have lower or higher levels of loneliness.

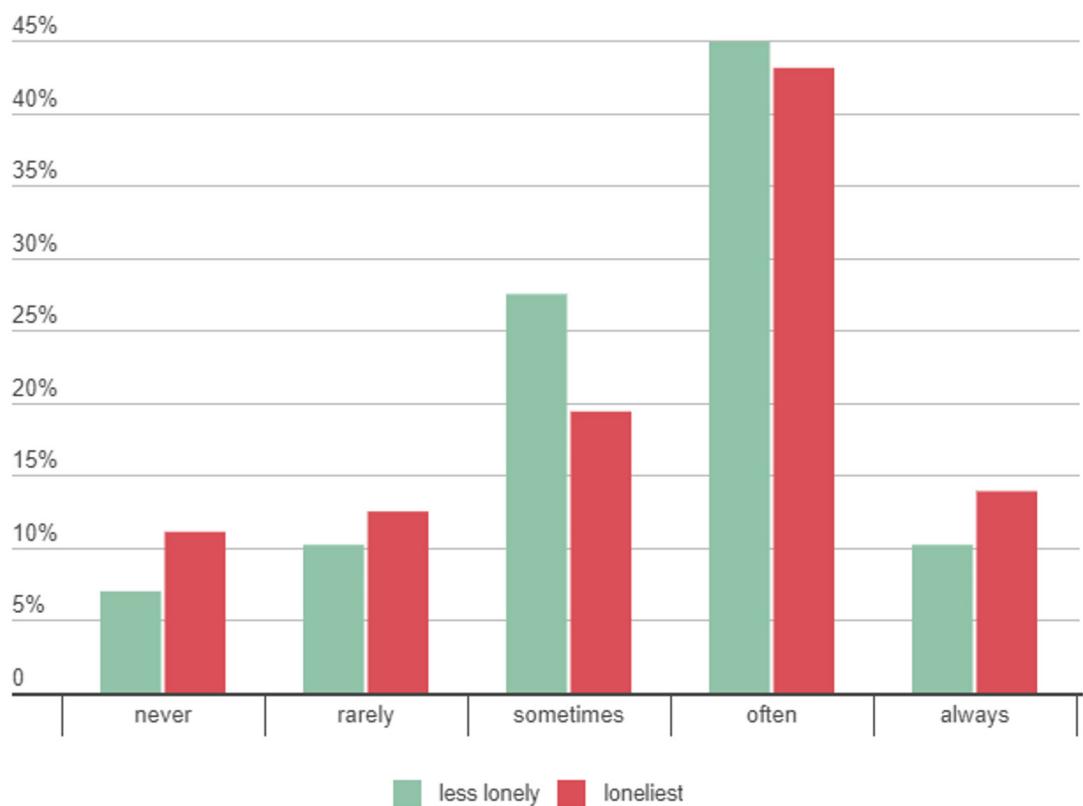


Figure 1 - Distribution of the Percentage of Young People Who Use Streaming When They Feel Lonely or Bored, Comparing the Less Lonely and Loneliest Groups

This is in line with the literature that points to entertainment as the main motivator for binge-watching (Sung et al., 2018), and the main motivations for starting to stream: relaxing, relieving boredom and escaping (Castro et al., 2021). Whether this association with streaming as a response to loneliness and boredom is a legacy of the pandemic should be questioned. The research by (Dixit et al., 2020) re-

garding the consumption of binge-watching during the period of isolation, states that the psychological motivations behind this practice are to pass time and fight boredom, relieve stress and overcome loneliness. As the results here indicate, the use of streaming in situations of solitude and boredom is used regardless of the individual's level of loneliness, which could be in line with the study of (Boursier et al., 2021) which points out that both negative (anxiety and escapism) and positive (social factors) motivators can predict immersion and loss of control during streaming consumption.

5. Conclusion & Future Research

Technological advances have led to changes in both the production and distribution as well as the consumption of series and films. Audiences choose streaming platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hulu, Disney+, etc. as their preferred channels for audiovisual consumption. These platforms have made it possible for audiences to watch the content they want, when they want and where they want, which has created an abrupt break with traditional television consumption patterns. This research delves into understanding the habits of consumption of streaming by young audiences in Portugal, with a special focus on compulsive consumption, i.e., binge-watching. This type of consumption is analyzed in relation to the mental health of young people, specifically their level of loneliness, using the UCLA Loneliness Scale as the measurement instrument. The central question guiding this analysis is: *Is there a relationship between the level of loneliness and binge-watching among young people in Portugal?*

Guided by four research objectives, this study concluded that there is a significant relationship between average age and the level of loneliness of young people. Specifically, statistical tests indicate that as individuals get older, their level of loneliness tends to decrease. In relation to binge-watching habits, a significant relationship was found between this behavior and the professional situation of the respondents. The findings suggest that students are more likely to engage in compulsive series consumption, while this habit tends to decline as individuals enter the job market and face professional responsibilities. This pattern aligns with the findings of Aytas & Topatan (2024) who observed that young people with no labor market experience are more prone to compulsive media consumption.

This study confirms the existence of a relationship between the daily time spent streaming and the level of loneliness of young people, with those experiencing higher levels of loneliness tending to spend more time streaming each day. Furthermore, when examining the practice of binge-watching—defined as the compulsive daily consumption of audiovisual content—it is evident that young people who engage in this behavior report higher levels of loneliness compared to those who do not. This finding is consistent with previous research conducted in other geographical contexts with similarly aged populations (Yu & Alizadeh, 2024). These results not only reinforce the current study's conclusions but also highlight binge-watching as a widespread behavior with potential implications for youth mental health across diverse cultural and national settings.

When analyzing the use of streaming as a response to feelings of loneliness or boredom, the data show that both young people with lower and higher levels of loneliness tend to use streaming in similar ways—as a means of coping with solitude and boredom. This finding aligns with previous studies, which identify key motivations for streaming as passing the time, seeking entertainment, relaxing, and escaping from reality. Binge-watching, therefore, emerges as a multifaceted practice. It may serve purely as a source of entertainment (Qayyoun & Malik, 2023; Shim & Kim, 2018) as a way to pass time (Starosta, 2020) or as a strategy for emotional regulation and support (Sun & Chang, 2021). Given this complexity, future studies should pay close attention to the motivations behind binge-watching. Aytas & Topatan (2024) for instance, found a significant relationship between binge-watching and positive mo-

tivations, while Ulusoy et al., (2025) highlighted the distinction between intentional and unintentional compulsive consumption. These findings reinforce the idea that emotional states and intentions play a key role in binge-watching behavior (Bastos et al., 2024).

This paper serves as an initial contribution towards understanding the relationship of the emerging adult population in Portugal with loneliness and streaming consumption, especially in a compulsive way. It should be noted that the study looked at the relationship between these two phenomena, and that further research is needed to try to understand the cause and effect between these variables. A key limitation of this study lies in the fact that, although the tests yielded statistically significant results, the data also indicate that other factors may influence these relationships. The phenomenon under investigation is highly complex, suggesting that additional variables—yet to be explored—may play a role. This highlights the potential and need for further research to deepen our understanding of the dynamics involved. Possible future research could try to understand how these behaviors develop over time as we move away from the pandemic period; the consequences of young people resorting to media escapism for their social lives, and whether the practices of compulsive streaming consumption are allied to other addictive behaviors.

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