

Toward an in-depth understanding of binge-watching behavior : a qualitative approach with focus group

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Background and aims: Binge-watching (i.e., seeing multiple episodes of the same TV serie in a row) now constitutes a widespread phenomenon, potentially leading to excessive involvement and adverse consequences for some individuals. However, little is known about the psychological factors underlying this habit, as reflected by the paucity of available studies, most of them merely applying the classical criteria used for other addictive disorders without exploring the specificity and uniqueness of binge-watching. The present study thus aims at making a first step toward a genuine understanding of binge-watching behavior, through a qualitative analysis of its phenomenology. *Methods:* A focus group (N=7) was settled at the Université catholique de Louvain with people usually watching TV series. Questions explored included a wide range of aspects related to binge-watching, like the various motives involved, viewing practices and related behaviors. *Results:* A thematic content analysis allowed the identification of the unique features of binge-watching behavior. Centrally, while most participants acknowledged that TV series watching can be potentially addictive and likely to become problematic, they all agreed having trouble recognizing themselves as “addict”. Indeed, even though some meaningful connections could be established with substance addiction criteria, such parallelism appeared insufficient as numerous distinctive facets emerged including a set of unique behaviors focusing around TV series watching. *Conclusions:* Relying extensively to the addiction model to account for binge-watching could thus lead to miss a genuine approach to the topic by leaving aside its specificities. Beyond binge-watching, there is a strong need for more qualitative studies to examine excessive manifestations of everyday behaviors or leisure activities which have been a priori proposed as reflecting addictive disorders. Indeed, approaching their unique phenomenology and symptomatology is required to generate the first steps of an adequate theoretical rationale to understand these emerging problematic behaviors.