

# WHOS WATCHING?

## Exploring potential psychosocial subgroup differences in the links between binge-watching and loneliness

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Previous research done in our research lab (Simmons et al., 2019) found that binge-watching frequency was negatively correlated with a variety of health behaviors and psychological health, including loneliness.

The aim of the current study was to further examine links between binge-watching and loneliness by examining potential moderators of this relationship. We hypothesized that the relationship between loneliness and binge-watching frequency would be stronger among:

- (1) freshman, relative to upperclassmen
- (2) single students, relative to students in a relationship, and
- (3) students scoring high on the Need to Belong Scale, relative to those scoring low.



Participants ( $M_{age} = 19.45$ ; 93% white; 78% female) came from a sample of college students at a small liberal arts college. They received credit towards psychology courses for participating. 254 participants completed the online survey and are included in the current analyses. Participants completed a variety of measures. The focus of the current analysis includes the following:

- Demographics
- A single item to assess binge-watching frequency
  - How frequently do you binge-watch shows? (1 = rarely, 7 = very frequently)
- Loneliness Scale (Hawkley et al., 2009)
  - How often have you felt a lack of companionship?
- Need to Belong Scale (Leary et al., 2006)
  - I try hard not to do things that will make other people avoid or reject me.



Low Need to Belong: Loneliness  $r = .07, p = .50$  BW Frequency

High Need to Belong: Loneliness  $r = .23, p = .02$  BW Frequency

As predicted, among those scoring High on the NTBS, correlation between Binge-watching frequency and loneliness is significantly moderately correlated. There is no correlation in those scoring low on the NTBS.

Not in a relationship: Loneliness  $r = -.06, p = .59$  BW Frequency

Not in a relationship: Loneliness  $r = .29, p = .001$  BW Frequency

As predicted, among those in a romantic relationship, the correlation between loneliness and BW frequency was not significant. Among those not in a relationship, the correlation was significant, as predicted.

Freshman: Loneliness  $r = .17, p = .15$  BW Frequency

Sophomore: Loneliness  $r = .19, p = .09$  BW Frequency

Junior: Loneliness  $r = .21, p = .21$  BW Frequency

Senior: Loneliness  $r = .03, p = .88$  BW Frequency

Contrary to hypotheses, the link between loneliness and BW frequency was not stronger from freshman relative to upperclassmen.



Our hypotheses were partially supported; although the link between loneliness and BW frequency was not stronger for freshman relative to upperclassmen, the correlation was stronger for those not in relationships and high scorers on NTBS. The weak correlations in the year of school analyses were likely due to an inadequate sample size. The results of this study shed light on psychosocial and demographic factors that may represent particular vulnerabilities to the deleterious social correlates of binge-watching.