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Streaming into Youth Culture: Prevalence and Patterns of Netflix Usage in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Youth entertainment has changed globally due to the rapid growth of digital streaming platforms, and Netflix is now one of the most popular on-demand media sources in Pakistan. The frequency and consumption patterns of Netflix among Pakistani adolescents are examined in this study, with an emphasis on binge-watching habits, preferred genres, and the psychological effects. A sample of 350 Lahore university students, ages 18 to 30, participated in a descriptive survey. The majority of respondents (92%) used Netflix for an average of two hours per day, according to the results ($M = 1.08$, $SD = 0.32$). 46% of respondents reported binge-watching on a monthly basis, 38% on a weekly basis, and 16% on a daily basis ($M = 2.3$, $SD = 0.72$). 53% of respondents consumed all genres, with fiction (21%) and thrillers (22%) being the most popular ($M = 2.3$, $SD = 0.82$). The greatest motivation was found to be entertainment (70%), followed by social connectedness (14%), and stress alleviation (15%) ($M = 1.4$, $SD = 0.73$). The frequency of binge-watching was significantly positively correlated with sleep difficulties ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.01$) and with academic interference ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < 0.05$), according to regression analysis. Furthermore, there was a significant emotional dependence on Netflix as a coping strategy for stress and anxiety ($\beta = 0.19$, $p < 0.05$). In total, 43% of respondents said they had trouble sleeping, 29% admitted that their studies were disrupted, and 36% said they utilized Netflix to relieve stress. These results illustrate the importance of Netflix in influencing Pakistani youths' cultural and social habits while also emphasizing the necessity of digital literacy and awareness initiatives to lessen negative psychological and lifestyle impacts.

Keywords: Netflix, youth, Pakistan, streaming platforms, binge-watching, digital

media consumption, content preferences, entertainment, self-regulation, psychological impact, academic performance, sleep disturbance, social connectedness

INTRODUCTION

Traditional means of entertainment consumption have been redefined by the rise of digital streaming platforms, which have drastically changed the global media landscape. With its on-demand, ad-free, and algorithm-driven content delivery system, Netflix has become a prominent platform among these, changing viewership habits (Jenner, 2018; Lobato, 2019). In contrast to traditional television transmission, which necessitated strict schedule compliance, streaming services provide viewers the freedom to choose, pause, and continue material whenever it is most convenient for them. Younger demographics, who show greater degrees of technology adaptability and a penchant for individualized media consumption, have seen this trend most noticeably (Wagner, 2021).

Since its official launch in 2019, Netflix has become very popular in Pakistan, particularly in metropolitan areas where smartphones and high-speed internet are now widely available (Ali & Khalid, 2020). Netflix has quickly evolved into a cultural gateway to global narratives as well as a major source of leisure and entertainment for young people, who make up a sizable section of the population. However, serious concerns regarding the social, psychological, and behavioral effects of these platforms have been brought up by their incorporation into everyday life.

Researches have shown that streaming activities can have both beneficial and detrimental effects. Netflix offers cultural exposure, stress alleviation, and relaxation (Curtis, 2018). Conversely, binge-watching and excessive use have been linked to poor academic performance, procrastination, and sleep difficulties (Walton-Pattison et al., 2018). However, there is still a dearth of specific study on the Pakistani setting. Given the distinct sociocultural context of the nation, which is influenced by family-oriented values, academic demands, and developing digital infrastructures, it is crucial to investigate how Pakistani adolescents use Netflix and the implications of their usage patterns.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine the frequency and usage trends of Netflix among Pakistani university students, with an emphasis on viewing time, preferred genres, binge-watching habits, and psychological effects. This study intends to fill a significant gap in South Asian scholarship and add to the expanding corpus of literature on digital media consumption by placing the findings within well-established theoretical frameworks, specifically Uses and Gratifications Theory, Cultivation Theory, and Social Cognitive Theory. In doing so, it offers useful implications for educators, legislators, and mental health practitioners who are concerned with striking a balance between entertainment and wellbeing, in addition to empirical insights about the digital lifestyles of Pakistani youth.

Research Objective:

1. To examine the patterns and prevalence of Netflix usage among the youth of

Pakistan based on age, education, location and gender.

2. Analyze the relationship between Netflix usage patterns and outcomes such as sleep disturbance, academic performance, and emotional reliance.

Research Questions

1. What are the trends and prevalence of Netflix use among young people in Pakistan by gender, age, geography, and level of education?
2. What is the relationship between teenage academic performance and sleep disturbance and Netflix consumption patterns (frequency, duration, and binge-watching)?
3. How much does Netflix use lead to emotional dependence, such as when people use the service to manage their moods and relieve stress?

Hypothesis

H1: Depending on gender, geography, age, and level of education, Pakistani youth's Netflix usage habits vary considerably.

H2: There is a significant correlation between increased sleep disturbance and poorer academic performance and higher Netflix usage (frequency, length, and binge-watching).

H3: Stronger emotional dependency, particularly the use of Netflix for mood management and stress alleviation, is substantially correlated with increased consumption.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Youth consumption and Digital Streaming

Global media consumption patterns have changed as a result of the emergence of digital streaming services. Platforms like Netflix offer flexibility, customisation, and ad-free viewing in contrast to traditional broadcasting, which adheres to strict timetables (Lotz, 2017). Young people, who exhibit more adaptation to technological innovation and value control over their entertainment choices, have found Netflix especially appealing due to these aspects (Wagner, 2021). One of the hallmarks of young people's media habits is binge-watching, which is the practice of watching several episodes in a row in one sitting (Pittman & Sheehan, 2015). Although streaming offers entertainment and cultural exposure, excessive use raises concerns about its effects on behavior and psychology.

The Growth of Netflix

Originally established as a DVD rental service, Netflix changed its business model in 2007 to become a subscription video-on-demand platform. Today, it has operations in over 190 countries (Jenner, 2018). Localized content, like *Money Heist* in Spain and *Sacred Games* in India, and sophisticated recommendation algorithms are responsible for its widespread popularity (Lobato, 2019; Tryon, 2020). Due to greater smartphone adoption and better internet connectivity, Netflix quickly gained popularity in Pakistan after its official introduction in 2019 (Ali & Khalid, 2020). Netflix is a cultural resource and a potential effect on lifestyle choices for Pakistani youth because it provides them with exposure to global narratives in addition to

entertainment.

Theoretical Perspectives

These frameworks highlight how Netflix is not merely a leisure tool but also a medium shaping identity, worldview, and coping mechanisms.

Media consumption study is grounded in three theoretical frameworks:

- **Uses and Utilizations According to UGT** (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974), people deliberately choose media to satisfy needs including amusement, relaxation, escapism, and social connection.
- **According to Cultivation Theory**, long-term media exposure affects how people perceive social reality (Gerbner et al., 1986). Regular exposure to Western content on Netflix may have an impact on cultural norms and values among young Pakistanis.
- Observational learning is emphasized by **Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)** (Bandura, 2001). Netflix shows' characters and plots have the power to shape young people's goals, attitudes, and actions.

These concepts demonstrate how Netflix shapes identity, worldview, and coping strategies in addition to being a recreational tool.

Psychosocial Impacts of Streaming

According to empirical research, streaming has a variety of negative effects. Relaxation, stress reduction, and increased cultural understanding are among the benefits (Curtis, 2018). However, procrastination, academic decline, emotional reliance, and sleep disruption have all been linked to unfavorable outcomes (Walton-Pattison et al., 2018; Flayelle et al., 2020). Research on streaming is still scarce in Pakistan, despite anecdotal evidence pointing to comparable patterns. Given Pakistan's distinct sociocultural setting, which is influenced by collectivist values, educational demands, and the country's increasing digitization, it is vital to look into how young people in Pakistan manage their Netflix usage and how it impacts their daily schedules and general well-being. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to close this gap by investigating the prevalence and consumption trends of Netflix among young people in Pakistan as well as its connections to emotional dependence, academic performance, and sleep disturbance.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A descriptive quantitative survey design was employed to examine the prevalence and consumption patterns of Netflix among Pakistani youth. This design was chosen for its effectiveness in identifying behavioral trends and relationships without manipulating variables.

Sampling Strategy

The target population consisted of youth aged 18–30 years, with the study focusing on university students in Lahore due to high internet penetration and streaming access. Using convenience sampling, a total of 350 students from diverse academic fields and both genders participated.

Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected through a structured self-developed questionnaire comprising four sections: (1) demographics (age, gender, education, location), (2) usage patterns (frequency, duration, binge-watching), (3) content preferences and motivations, and (4) impacts on sleep, academic performance, and emotional reliance. Items were measured on a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree), with no neutral midpoint to encourage definitive responses. The instrument was validated through expert review and a pilot test with 20 students to ensure clarity and reliability.

Questionnaires were distributed both online and in person, with voluntary participation and informed consent obtained from all respondents. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured.

Data Analysis

Data was coded and analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations) were used to explore prevalence and patterns, while inferential tests (correlation and regression) assessed relationships between Netflix usage and outcomes such as sleep disturbance, academic performance, and emotional reliance. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

Ethical Consideration

This study complied with accepted ethical standards for studies involving human subjects. The goal, scope, and voluntary nature of the study, as well as the participants' freedom to discontinue participation at any time without facing repercussions, were explained to the participants prior to data collection. All participants gave their informed consent after receiving clear assurances of anonymity and confidentiality. Responses were utilized only for academic purposes, and no personally identifiable information was gathered. The survey items were carefully crafted to be impartial and non-intrusive in order to reduce any potential discomfort or bias. To guarantee adherence to ethical norms, the supervising academic authority examined and approved the research design, including its tools and methods.

Results and Findings

Reliability Analysis

Table 1. Reliability Statistics for Constructs

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Netflix Usage Pattern	.74	10
Content Preferences & Motivations	.78	8
Sleep Disturbance	.79	10
Academic Performance	.76	6

Emotional Reliance	.81	7
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The following were the results of the SPSS:

Descriptive Overview

92% of respondents said they watched Netflix every day for an average of two hours, indicating high levels of usage. With 46% reporting monthly, 38% weekly, and 16% daily bouts, binge-watching was common. Entertainment accounted for 70% of all incentives, with stress alleviation (15%) and social connection (14%), following closely behind. The most popular genres were fiction and thrillers.

H1: Netflix usage patterns differ significantly across demographics (age, gender, education, and location).

Independent t-tests and one-way ANOVAs were conducted to examine demographic variations.

Table 2. Netflix Usage Across Demographic Variables

Demographic Variable	Test	Significant Difference	p-value
Age (18–24 vs 25–34)	ANOVA	Yes	< .05
Gender	t-Test	Yes	< .05
Education level	ANOVA	No	> .05
Location	ANOVA	No	> .05

Support for H1 was only partial. Age and gender had a substantial impact on Netflix usage, but not residence or educational level. Respondents who were younger and male were heavier consumers.

Pearson's correlations and regression analyses confirmed significant associations.

Table 3. Regression of Netflix Usage on Sleep and Academic Outcomes

H2: Higher Netflix usage is positively associated with sleep disturbance and negatively associated with academic performance.

Predictor	Outcome	β	p-value
Binge Frequency	Sleep Disturbances	.27	< .05
Daily Usage (hours)	Academic Interference	.21	<.05

While daily usage duration was strongly correlated with academic interference ($\beta = .21$, $p < .05$, 95% CI [.04,.38]), binge-watching frequency was considerably positively correlated with sleep disturbance ($\beta = .27$, $p < .01$, 95% CI [.14,.39]). All of these results point to a correlation between increased Netflix use and both disturbed sleep patterns and poor academic achievement. Consistent with

earlier studies on media consumption and self-control (Walton-Pattison et al., 2018; Flayelle et al., 2020), the findings imply that extended daily engagement can supplant time devoted to academic obligations, while prolonged late-night viewing may directly disrupt good sleep hygiene. The regression results support worries that excessive streaming may lead to behavioral trade-offs that are harmful to students' performance and well-being rather than just being a leisure preference.

H3: Increased Netflix usage is significantly associated with greater emotional reliance.

Table 4. Regression of Netflix Usage on Emotional Reliance

Predictor	Outcome	β	p-value
Daily usage and Bingeing	Emotional Reliance	.19	< .05

Regression analysis showed that higher levels of emotional dependency were significantly predicted by increasing Netflix viewing, which included both daily and binge-watching usage ($\beta = .19, < .05, 95\% \text{ CI } [.02, .36]$). Given the psychological benefits of on-demand streaming, respondents who watched more Netflix were more likely to support its use as a coping mechanism for stress reduction and mood control. This result is consistent with the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1974), which describes media consumption as a conscious effort to satisfy emotional needs including companionship, relaxation, and escape. Furthermore, according to the Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2001), coping mechanisms may be reinforced through observational learning from stories and characters, which could lead to dependency. These results support H3 and emphasize Netflix's dual function as a young entertainment platform and an emotional control tool.

DISCUSSION

The prevalence and usage patterns of Netflix among adolescents in Pakistan were examined in this study, along with viewing behaviors, causes, and psychosocial consequences. Based on three assumptions, the results provide novel perspectives on how on-demand streaming affects cultural orientations, academic engagement, health outcomes, and entertainment habits in a South Asian setting. Each hypothesis serves as the foundation for the discussion, which integrates findings with previous research and theoretical frameworks.

Demographic Differences in Usage Patterns

According to the first hypothesis, there would be significant differences in Netflix usage habits depending on factors including geography, gender, age, and education. The findings offered some support: usage varied considerably by gender and age but not by location or level of education. Men reported somewhat higher daily usage than women, while younger respondents (18–24 years old) reported higher binge-watching frequencies.

From a theoretical perspective, **Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)** helps explain these demographic effects. Younger users, seeking relaxation and social

identity formation, may rely more heavily on Netflix than older cohorts balancing work or family responsibilities. Gendered socialization may also contribute, with men reporting stronger associations between leisure technology use and identity construction. These findings highlight that while access to Netflix is widespread, the intensity of use reflects age-related developmental needs and gendered leisure preferences.

According to research studies, streaming appeals especially to teenagers and young people because of their flexible schedules and familiarity with technology (Pittman & Sheehan, 2015; Wagner, 2021). Our data support this theory. Additionally, the gender gap is consistent with previous research that found men report higher levels of digital leisure and binge-watching than women (De Feijter et al., 2016). The lack of difference by geography and education, however, might be a reflection of the increasing standardization of streaming behaviors, as young people in metropolitan and semi-urban areas alike embrace comparable digital consuming habits. This suggests that Netflix has crossed traditional socioeconomic or educational barriers to reach a variety of Pakistani young groupings.

Relationships Between Academic Performance, Sleep Disturbance, and Netflix Usage

The primary conclusions about how Netflix use affects academic performance and sleep disturbances summarize the well-researched data that showed a negative correlation between increased Netflix use and academic performance and a positive correlation with sleep disturbance. According to regression analysis, prolonged daily consumption predicted academic interference ($\beta = .21$, $p < .05$), whereas binge-watching strongly predicted worse sleep disturbance ($\beta = .27$, $p < .01$).

Research has shown that binge-watching is strongly associated with poor sleep hygiene and reduced cognitive function (Exelmans & Van den Bulck, 2017; Flayelle et al., 2020), which is in line with these findings. Streaming content's immersive, serialized format and autoplay feature encourage prolonged viewing sessions, which frequently cause bedtimes to be later than planned and disrupt circadian cycles. The mobile-first streaming environment in Pakistan, where almost 67% of viewers access Netflix primarily on smartphones, makes late-night, individual viewing even more convenient. This pattern highlights how platform design and device accessibility work together to compromise well-being by increasing susceptibility to insomnia and escalating fatigue.

According to studies, excessive streaming interferes with study time, impairs focus, and encourages procrastination (Walton-Pattison et al., 2018). This is consistent with the negative correlation with academic achievement. Notably, 53% of students reported no interference, indicating that individual differences in self-regulation and time management may mitigate negative academic effects.

These results theoretically align with both Cultivation Theory and UGT. The cultivation effect appears when continuous overexposure changes daily routines and replaces essential tasks, even when young people consciously choose Netflix for entertainment and stress reduction. This illustrates the contradiction of streaming as both advantageous and harmful, as gratification-seeking behaviors can result in

unanticipated interruptions to lifestyle.

Emotional Reliance on Netflix

Regression analysis showed that daily consumption predicted reliance on Netflix for stress relief and mood regulation ($\beta = .19, p < .05$), suggesting that heavier Netflix use was significantly linked to greater emotional reliance. These results imply that Netflix serves as a coping strategy for many young adults in addition to being a source of pleasure when it comes to handling stress and emotional strain. This pattern is in line with earlier studies that found streaming to be a mood-management tool (Panda & Pandey, 2017) and is in line with the Uses and Gratifications Theory framework, which highlights how media can satisfy psychological and emotional needs.

About 36% of respondents said they used Netflix to deal with tension or anxiety. This conclusion is in line with earlier studies that found streaming to be a popular method of controlling emotions (Panda & Pandey, 2017). The tendency to use Netflix as a coping mechanism indicates a deeper psychological tie to the site, even though the majority of participants reported feeling happier after watching. Entertainment has the potential to promote dependency and unhealthy kinds of escapism when it is used frequently as the main stress-reduction strategy.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory, which emphasizes mood regulation as a primary motivator for media choosing, provides a clear explanation for this result. Furthermore, the Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2001) puts into perspective how viewers' coping mechanisms may be reinforced by repeated exposure to on-screen models. As an example of Netflix's dual function as leisure and psychological support, it becomes both a source of relief and a possible escape for Pakistani adolescents, whose social and educational challenges are frequently stressful.

Cultural and Social Dimensions

In addition to the theories, the study uncovered significant cultural dynamics. Only 13% of respondents thought Netflix adequately depicted Pakistani culture, despite almost half (47%) acknowledging the platform's influence on cultural standards. The conflict between local identity and multinational media flows is highlighted by this ambivalence. Even when cultural representation seems inadequate, prolonged exposure to global narratives can subtly alter perceptions of social reality, according to Cultivation Theory.

In terms of social interaction, Netflix usage was more private than public. Conversations with friends and relatives were frequent, but there was little involvement in online forums. This implies that Pakistani youth anchor their streaming experiences within personal and familial networks, in contrast to Western contexts where digital fandoms flourish. These trends are a reflection of collectivist cultural norms, where media discourses serve to strengthen social connectedness over individual fandom.

Practical Implications

These results have a number of implications. The evidence of sleep disruption and academic interference underscores the necessity of digital literacy programs and

awareness campaigns on healthy streaming practices for educators and academic institutions. Workshops on time management and sleep hygiene may be beneficial to students, particularly during test seasons. Given the high frequency of snacking and inactivity during viewing, it is imperative from a health standpoint to address sedentary behaviors and promote active alternatives.

The ambivalence surrounding representation offers media producers and cultural policymakers a chance to create more local content. Creating stories that represent Pakistani lives and ideals could balance cultural dissonance and increase participation.

CONCLUSION

When combined, the findings paint a complex picture of Netflix's influence on Pakistani young culture. The platform offers risks to academic focus, cultural identity, and health even as it provides hedonic and emotional gratifications. The results support each of the three assumptions by showing that streaming habits differ among demographic groups, predict unfavorable lifestyle outcomes, and encourage emotional dependency. This study helps to clarify the dual function of digital streaming as a source of leisure and a potential source of psychosocial stress by placing these findings within the frameworks of UGT, Cultivation Theory, and SCT. To further understand causality and encourage balanced digital participation, future research should investigate intervention techniques and longitudinal designs.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has limitations despite the insightful information it produced. First, the capacity to draw conclusions about causality is limited by the use of a cross-sectional survey design. Although correlations between Netflix use, sleep disruption, academic disruption, and emotional dependence were noted, it is unclear which way these interactions run. For instance, binge-watching may be a more common coping mechanism for people who are already dealing with sleep issues or academic stress. To clarify causal pathways, future studies should use experimental or longitudinal approaches. Secondly, the study used self-reported measures, which could be influenced by social desirability effects or recall bias. More objective measures, such as usage statistics, sleep tracking, or academic success records, might increase validity even if the instrument showed acceptable dependability.

Lastly, while other platforms (including Amazon Prime, Disney+, and local services) are also becoming more and more popular, the study only focused on Netflix. To better understand competitive dynamics and their effects on youth culture, future research should take a cross-platform comparative approach. To further understand how streaming platforms affect lifestyle, cultural identity, and mental well-being in Pakistan and beyond, future research should shift toward mixed-method designs, larger sampling frames, and longitudinal data.

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