TRAPPED IN THE VIRTUAL WORLD: EXCESSIVE AND LONELY WATCHING OF PARASOCIAL INTERACTIONS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Abstract. This study aims to determine the influence of excessive viewing and loneliness on parasocial interactions. This study uses a quantitative approach. The subjects of the study were 84 students of the Faculty of Dentistry Mulawarman who were selected using probability sampling techniques. The data collection methods used were the overviewing scale, the loneliness scale, and the parasocial interaction scale. The data analysis technique used is multiple linear regression. The collected data was analyzed with the help of the Statistical Package For Social Science (SPSS) version 21.0 for windows program. The results showed that: (1) there was an effect of the intensity of excessive watching use and loneliness on parasocial interaction with a value of F count = 93.459 > F table = 3.11 and a P value = 0.000 and had an influence contribution (R^2) of 69.8%. (2) there was a significant effect between excessive menonots and social interactions with the value of the beta coefficient (β) = 0.788, t count = 12.694 > t table = 1.989 and p = 0.000 (p < 0.005). (3) Then in loneliness with parasocial interactions, it shows t count > t table which means that there is a significant influence with the value of the beta coefficient (β) = -0.171, t count = -2.754 > t table = 1.989 and p = 0.007 (p > 0.05). Further research may explore other factors that influence parasocial interactions, such as media type, intensity of social media use, or demographic characteristics.

Keywords: parasocial interaction; excessive watching; loneliness

I. INTRODUCTION

The development of technological advances in this era of globalization has brought many advances from various social aspects. Digital technology has made it easier for humans to carry out various activities, such as communicating, shopping, trading, and exchanging information [1]. However, behind this convenience, digital technology also has a negative impact, such as facilitating crimes, damaging the mentality of the younger generation, and making it easier to violate copyright. These impacts are a great challenge for humanity in facing technological developments [2].

The digital revolution began in the 1980s, with the switch from mechanical and analog technology to digital technology, and continues to evolve today [3]. Along with these advances, various countries, including Indonesia, are feeling the great impact of digital technology, especially in terms of the use of smart devices such as smartphones. Indonesia, which has more than 250 million people, is known as the "sleeping giant of Asia's digital technology," and is the largest contributor of users smartphone. Digital marketing research institute eMarketer recorded a significant increase in the number of smartphone users in Indonesia, which shows the growing trend of digital consumption [4]. This data shows that the majority of internet users in Indonesia come from teenagers, who are increasingly accessing various digital content, including entertainment.

Along with technological advances and the shift of media consumption to digital platforms, people's interest in various types of entertainment media, especially those from abroad, is increasing[5]. One of the rapidly growing cultural phenomena is the love for Japanese anime, which has been known since 1963. Anime has not only become popular culture in Japan, but also developed Japanese cultural values that are increasingly popular with global audiences, including in Indonesia [1].

In addition to the Korean cultural phenomenon that is already widely known through dramas and K-Pop, Japanese anime has had a huge impact on the global entertainment industry. Anime is a comic that is turned into an animated video, with characters evolving into figures that live in the minds of their viewers [4]. One important aspect of this phenomenon is the emergence of parasocial interaction, which is a one-way relationship between fans and media personalities, which occurs when individuals feel connected to their idols, even if the relationship is not real [6]. This phenomenon is not only found among fans of K-Pop or Korean dramas, but it is also very strong among fans of Japanese anime (Pertiwan & Pramita, 2023).

The phenomenon of binge-watching is one of the important aspects that is increasingly popular, especially among teenagers who enjoy anime [7]. This can affect psychological well-being, especially for those who experience loneliness. Overwatching is often an escape for individuals seeking entertainment or solace from their negative feelings [8].

Loneliness, which is a subjective feeling about a lack of adequate social connections, can be exacerbated by excessive viewing habits [9].

Based on the above presentation, researchers feel it is important to dig deeper into how excessive viewing behavior and feelings of loneliness can affect parasocial interactions in students, especially among students of the Faculty of Medicine, Mulawarman University. Therefore, this study aims to explore the influence of binge watching and loneliness on parasocial interactions in college students, focusing on media consumption behavior and its impact on their social and psychological well-being.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

A quantitative approach with multiple linear regression methods, parasocial interactions as bound variables, overwatching and loneliness as independent variables. This study involved 84 students of the Faculty of Medicine, Mulawarman University who were selected using a non-probability sampling technique, namely purposive sampling. The sample was selected based on certain criteria, namely students who tend to watch media excessively and feel lonely [10].

The data were collected using the Likert scale to measure three variables: parasocial interactions, binge watching, and loneliness. Validation of the measuring instrument is carried out through direct tests on research samples. The reliability of the parasocial interaction scale was 0.902 (9 out of 36 items were lost), the overviewing scale was 0.947 (1 out of 32 items were lost), and the loneliness scale was 0.882 (5 out of 48 items were lost).

Data analysis was carried out using multiple linear regression to determine the influence of independent variables on dependent variables, accompanied by assumption tests and hypothesis analysis. Data processing is carried out using SPSS version 21.0.

II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive data is used to describe the condition of data distribution in dental students of Mulawarman University. *Empirical mean* and hypothetical mean were obtained from the response of the research sample through three research scales, namely the scale of parasocial interaction, excessive watching, and loneliness.

Table 1. Empirical Mean and *Hypothetical* Mean

Variable	*Empirical* Mean	*Hypothetical* Mean	Status
Parasocial Interactions	80.20	67.5	Tall
Excessive Viewing	93.88	77.5	Tall
Aloneness	106.75	107.5	Low

Through table 1 above, From the table above, it can be seen that the general distribution of data on the research subjects

of dental students at Mulawarman University can be seen. Based on the results of measurement through the parasocial interaction scale, the empirical mean of 80.20 was obtained smaller than the hypothetical mean of 67.5 with a high status. The results showed that the subjects had high parasocial interactions.

Based on the results of the measurement of the Overviewing scale, it can be seen that the measurement results through the overviewing scale obtained *an* empirical mean of 93.88 greater than the hypothetical mean of 77.5 with a high status. These results showed that the subjects in this study had high overviewing.

Based on the results of the measurement through the empathy scale that has been filled in by the subjects, it can be seen that the measurement results through the loneliness scale obtained *an* empirical mean of 106.75 is smaller than *the* hypothetical mean of 107.5 with low status. These results show that the subjects in this study have high loneliness. The following are the results of the full model regression analysis test:

Table 2. Full Model Regression Analysis Test Results

Variable	F-count	F-Tab	R2	P
Parasocial Interaction (Y) Excessive Viewing (x1) Loneliness (X2)	93.459	3.11	0.698	0.000

Based on table 2 above, the results show that F counts > F table and $p < 0.05$ which means that excessive watching and loneliness on parasocial interaction have a significant influence with the value of F = 93.459 R^2 = 0.698 (69.8%), and p = 0.000. This means that the major hypothesis in this study is accepted, namely that there is excessive viewing and loneliness towards parasocial interactions. Then from the results of the gradual regression analysis, it can be known as follows:

Table 3. Results of the Phased Model Analysis Test

Variable	Beta	T Count	T Table	p
Excessive Viewing (x1) Parasocial Interaction (Y)	0.788	12.694	1.989	0.000
Loneliness (X2) Parasocial Interaction (Y)	-0.171	-2.754	1.989	0.007

Based on table 5 above, it can be seen that t counts > t table and $p < 0.05$ which means that there is a significant influence of excessive watching on parasocial interactions with the value of beta coefficient (β) = 0.788, t count = 12.694, and p = 0.000 (p < 0.05). This means that the minor hypothesis in this study is accepted, namely that there is an influence of excessive watching on parasocial interactions. Furthermore, the variable of loneliness on parasocial interactions showed t count > t table and p value < 0.05 which means that there was an effect of loneliness on parasocial interaction with the value of beta

coefficient (β) = -0.171, t count = -2.754, and p = 0.007 (p < 0.05). This means that the minor hypothesis in this study is accepted, namely that there is an influence of loneliness on parasocial interactions.

Discussion

This study aims to examine the effect of excessive viewing and loneliness on parasocial interactions among dental students of Mulawarman University. The results of the analysis showed that these two factors had a significant effect on the formation of parasocial interactions, which supported the hypothesis that excessive viewing and loneliness affect the individual's tendency to form parasocial relationships. Excessive viewing was shown to have a significant positive influence on parasocial interactions, while loneliness tended to show a negative influence on the quality of the parasocial relationships formed.

The results of the regression test showed that binge watching had a coefficient of 0.788, which means that the more often a person watches media, the greater the tendency to establish parasocial relationships. These findings are in line with the parasocial interaction theory first put forward by Harton dan Richard Wohl (1956) which states that individuals who spend a lot of time in front of screens tend to feel connected to characters in the media, even though these relationships are one-way and do not involve direct interaction with other individuals. In this context, dental students who spend more time watching media are more likely to feel a closeness to media characters, which increases the intensity of their parasocial interactions [12].

Meanwhile, loneliness also showed a negative influence with a regression coefficient of -0.171, this result still shows that individuals who feel lonely are more likely to form parasocial relationships. Although the quality of these relationships tends to be lower because they are substitutive, loneliness can encourage individuals to seek emotional outlet through characters in the media. This finding is in line with research by Wardani dan Rina (2021) which suggests that loneliness is associated with an increased tendency of individuals to engage in parasocial relationships as a form of compensation for the lack of real social interaction. Based on the results of the descriptive test, the average score on the overviewing scale was 93.88, which indicates that most respondents have a tendency to spend a long time watching media. On the other hand, the average on the loneliness scale showed that most respondents felt lonely, with an average score of 106.7. These results illustrate that excessive viewing and loneliness are the dominant factors in the pattern of parasocial interaction formed among dental students.

Overall, these findings confirm that binge watching strengthens the formation of parasocial relationships, while loneliness plays a role as a factor that encourages individuals to replace lost social interactions with parasocial relationships. This suggests that although parasocial interactions can be an outlet for lonely individuals, the relationships formed tend to be not as strong as real social relationships. Thus, although these two factors influence parasocial interactions, the influence of excessive viewing is more towards the formation of more intense and positive parasocial relationships compared to loneliness.

III. CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that there is a significant influence between binge watching and loneliness on parasocial interactions, where both variables provide a significant positive influence. This indicates that the higher the level of binge watching and loneliness, the greater the tendency of individuals to engage in parasocial interactions. There was a significant positive effect of Excessive Watching on Parasocial Interaction and there was a significant negative influence of Loneliness on Parasocial Interaction. The implication of these findings is the importance of further research that explores other factors that influence parasocial interactions, such as media type, intensity of social media use, or demographic characteristics. Further research may also develop interventions to reduce the negative impacts of overviewing and loneliness by promoting healthy social relationships, as well as using a longitudinal approach to understand the dynamics of these relationships over a longer period of time.

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