

To Explore Escapism and Satisfaction with Life Among Anime Watchers and Non-Anime Watchers

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ABSTRACT

The present study explores the relationship between anime watchers and non-anime watchers on Escapism, and Satisfaction with Life among young adults. The research checks for any differences in Self-expansion (adaptive escapism), Self-suppression (maladaptive escapism), and Satisfaction with Life levels between anime watchers and non-anime watchers. In this study Sampling of 200 participants was selected through purposive sampling from Kolkata and Howrah. The participants were administered by Stenseng et al.'s (2012) Escapism Scale along with Diener et al.'s (1985) Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). Statistical analyses were done using the Mann-Whitney U tests and descriptive statistics to make the comparisons between groups; the results revealed no significant differences between the anime-watching group and non-anime-watching group in self-expansion, self-suppression, or satisfaction with life. These findings show that anime watching does not influence escapism tendencies or satisfaction with life among young adults. The study contributes to media psychology literature by providing empirical evidence about anime's psychological impact. Limitations and directions for future research are discussed, including the need for longitudinal designs and genre-specific analyses.

Keywords: *Escapism, Satisfaction with Life, Anime Watchers, Non-Anime Watchers*

As society has reached a new stage in the age of digital technology, media consumption is an important part of everyone's daily life and watching Anime is one of the popular forms of entertainment. The animation style that comes from Japan has gained popularity all over the world. Its cultural influence is also increasing not only in Japan, but worldwide, devoted fans actively participate in fan art, conversations, and other creative activities. Anime has vast genres covering Fantasy, Horror, Psychological, Sports etc. As anime continues to grow popular in the early 2020s. Scholars have begun to explore the psychological effects associated with consistent consumption of anime. Among the most fascinating parts is the idea of escapism, a psychological tendency where individuals seek distraction and relief from the stressors and problems of daily life (Stenseng et al., 2012). Escapism comes in many forms i.e., fantasy immersion, daydreaming, and endless binge-watching, etc. For many viewers anime has a lot of options across many genres with immersive stories being an easy way to escape. Just as there is the idea of escapism there is the thought of satisfaction with life, the relative balance of happiness in a human life.

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Satisfaction with life, a person's psychological evaluation of the perceived quality of his or her life, captures how fulfilled and satisfied one feels (Diener et al., 1985). A study found that loneliness significantly gives rise to escapism, which increases identification with media characters as a sort of binge-watching method to help with the problem (Gabbiadini, 2021). Chen (2022) highlights the findings that include the fifteen-item Media Escapism Scale which was created to measure escapism better and captures individual differences in media use. The increase in engagement on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram is somewhat strongly associated with escapism tendencies between adolescents found in a study (Victor Ugochukwu Ezeonwumelu & Cornelius Christopher Okoro, 2024). Escapism in virtual gaming was associated to poor emotional and mental health outcomes like depression and anxiety, though in some cases it may afford short-term relief (Marques et al., 2023). The longitudinal study suggests that escapism drives harmful online behaviors, including excessive gaming, gambling and excessive use of the internet both in the short and long term (Jouhki et al., 2022). It was found that being active or engaging with the otaku content such as anime and manga, may reduce the negative effects of maladaptive daydreaming especially when coupled with mindfulness (Saito et al., 2019).

Need for the Study

With the rising popularity of anime across the globe, its psychological effects have remained less studied, especially in terms of escapism and life satisfaction. Preceding research, however, studied different media types, failing to address the unique affective and narrative pull possessed by anime. This research thus fills this gap in the literature by distinguishing between anime watchers and anime non-watchers by means of self-expansion, self-suppression, and life satisfaction, thereby extending the knowledge on the role of media in psychological well-being.

METHOD

Sample

The total sample for this study was 200 where, 100 were anime watchers and 100 were non-anime watchers between 18 to 25 years old. Inclusion criteria required participants to be within the specified age range that is 18 to 25, watch anime more than 3 hours in a week, report no history of psychiatric illness and have complete and consistent responses. Exclusion criteria included incomplete surveys and self-reported psychiatric conditions that could affect the results.

Tools

Scales used in this study are:

- i) Escapism Scale by Stenseng, Rise, & Kraft, 2012 included 14 Items. Measuring three separate subscales i.e.,
 - Self-Expansion consisting of 5 items, measures positive escapism, engaging in growth activities, learning activities, or experiences.
 - Self-Suppression consisting of 6 items, measures negative escapism, using activities to block the problems or avoid unwanted emotions.
 - Optional Escapism consisting of 3 items, measures general engagement and frequency and helps with interpretation.

Each item is rated on the Likert-type scale, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5/7 is strongly agree. Scores are calculated separately for each subscale.

- ii) Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) by Diener et al., (1985) includes a 5-item Likert scale. Each question is a measure of how satisfied a person feels with their life as a

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whole, where it ranges from 1 to 7 (1 means strongly disagree and 7 means strongly agree). The total score of this scale ranges from 5 to 35 and the higher the score, the higher the life satisfaction.

- iii) Demographic questionnaire that includes age, gender, education, occupation, family type, residence and anime-watching habits.

Procedure

In this study, Informed consent was obtained following a purposive sampling approach with university students aged 18–25, using offline self-report questionnaires to compare escapism and satisfaction with life between anime watchers and non-watchers. The data were analyzed using Descriptive and Inferential Statistics.

RESULTS

The Shapiro-Wilk test assessed normality for three variables using data from 200 participants. Self-Expansion ($p = 0.000$) and Satisfaction with Life ($p = 0.000$) showed significant deviations from normality, while Self-Suppression ($p = 0.058$) did not, indicating it is approximately normally distributed. Mann-Whitney Test was done to see the difference between anime watchers and non-anime watchers regarding Self-Suppression, Self-Expansion and Satisfaction with life.

Table 1: The table shows the mean and standard deviation of escapism scores (Self-Expansion, Self-Suppression) and Satisfaction with Life scores (SWL) of young adults (N=200).

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Self-Expansion	200	4.7350	0.85630
Self-Suppression	200	3.4441	1.06245
SWLS Scale	200	20.72	7.173

Table: 2 Finding significant differences between watchers and non- anime watchers with respect to Self-expansion.

Group	N	Mean rank	Mann-Whitney U value	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Anime watchers	100	94.41		
Anime non-watchers	100	106.60	4390.500	0.135

Sig. level is 0.05. The score is greater than 0.05.

Table: 3 Finding significant differences between watchers and non- anime watchers with respect to Self-suppression.

Group	N	Mean rank	Mann-Whitney U value	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Anime watchers	100	105.4		
Anime non-watchers	100	95.52	4502.000	0.223

Sig. level is 0.05. The score is greater than 0.05.

Table: 4 Finding significant differences between watchers and non- anime watchers with respect to Satisfaction with Life.

Group	N	Mean rank	Mann-Whitney U	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Anime watchers	100	98.32		
Anime non-watchers	100	102.68	4782.000	0.594

Sig. level is 0.05.

DISCUSSION

This study delved into how escapism and life satisfaction may relate to anime watchers and non-anime watchers. Results showed that there are no significant differences in self-expansion, self-suppression (maladaptive escapism), and life satisfaction between the two groups. This suggests that anime watching is used similarly to other leisure activities for coping with stress and it doesn't seem to have any special positive or negative effects on mental health. Supporting studies (e.g., Aron et al., 2001; Derrick et al., 2009; Krause & Rucker, 2020; Nabi & Kremer, 2004) suggest that escapism and satisfaction are more concerned with personality traits and emotion regulation than the media type. Another study by Wirth et al. (2012) also found an insignificant link between media consumption and life satisfaction. Yet, some studies (e.g., Karpinski & Duberstein, 2016; Tsay-Vogel et al., 2018) do suggest that heavy use of fantasy media might be related to lower life satisfaction and higher self-suppression. Basically, the results suggest that watching anime does not give any significant psychological impact on escapism or life satisfaction compared to non-watchers. Overall, the results suggest anime watching has no significant psychological impact on escapism or life satisfaction compared to non-watchers. Limitations include not considering

personal traits, stress levels, or emotions, which could have affected the responses. It also focused on students only from Kolkata and Howrah, and did not examine different anime types, viewing patterns, and or body reactions. Future researchers should include a more diverse sample and examine how different anime genres impact emotion through using both surveys and physical signs like stress levels etc. In the real world, anime could be used carefully in therapy or education, and young people should be taught to think about how media influences their feelings and behavior.

CONCLUSION

There were no significant differences between anime watchers and non-watchers in self-expansion, self-suppression and satisfaction with life, thereby accepting all null hypotheses. This adds to growing media psychology literature by showing that anime consumption is a balanced leisure activity, not strongly tied to escapism or life satisfaction.

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Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest in this study.

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