

# An Unsettling Comfort: The Allure of Psychological Horror





Credit: [Little Baby's Ice Cream](#)

# How Do You Feel?

How Do You Feel?



# RESEARCH QUESTION

Why do we find disturbing pieces of content, especially those featured in psychological horror films, entertaining despite the discomfort elicited?

# METHODOLOGY



Midsommar



Heredity



Requiem for a  
Dream

30+ People

24 Responses

288 Data Points



# ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

## Entertainment

"an experience that helps media users to cope with their everyday life"

- Enjoyment: At the Heart of Media Entertainment, Peter Vorderer, Christoph Klimmt, Ute Ritterfeld
- It's all entertainment—sure. But what exactly is entertainment? Communication research, media psychology, and the explanation of entertainment experiences, Peter Vorderer



# ENTERTAINMENT

A Desire

Cope with Reality

A Feeling

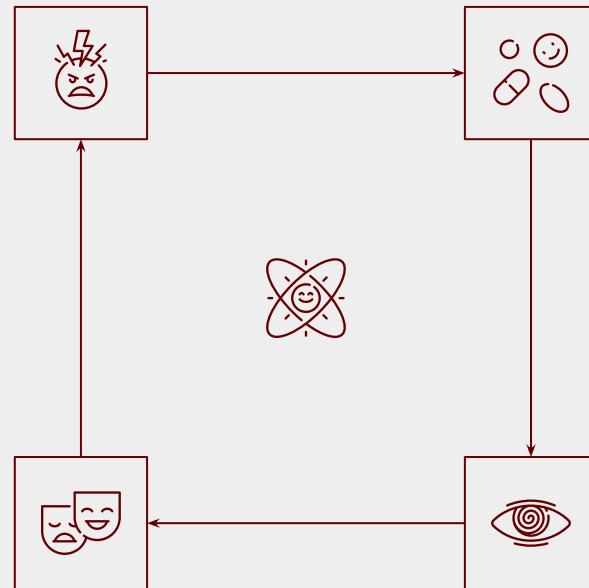
Distress to Euphoria

A Distraction

Mass Media

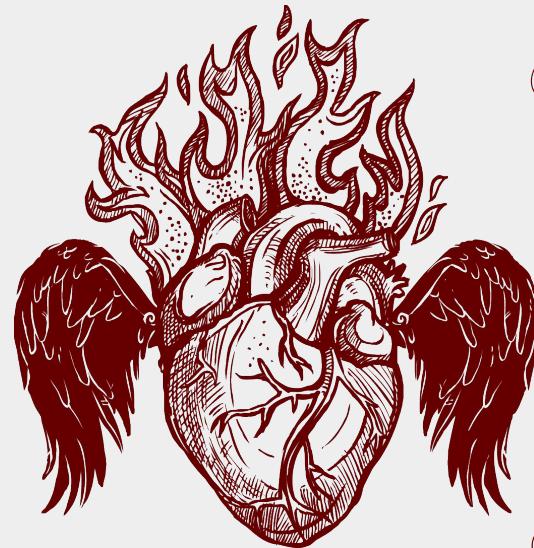
An Escape

Vicarious Pleasure

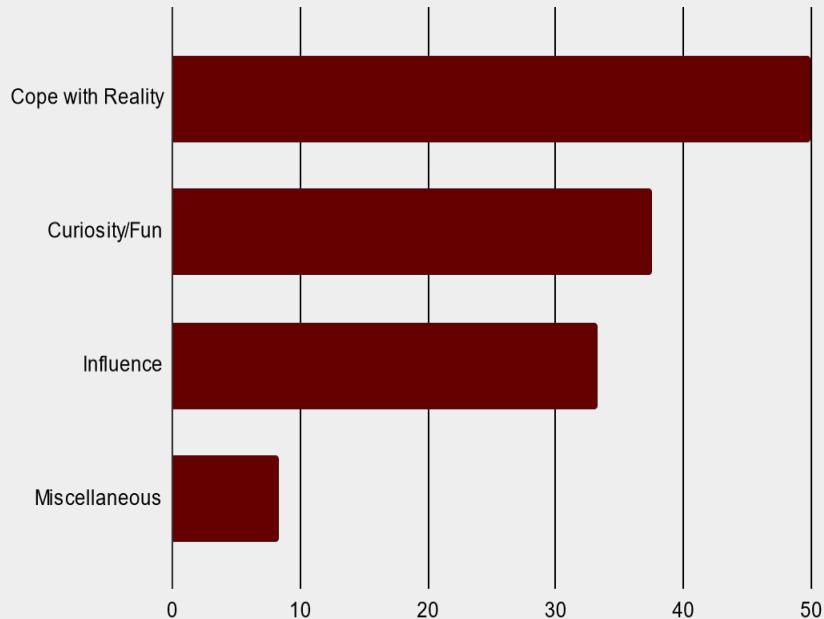


# SURVEY

An Examination of Psychological  
Horror-Induced Pleasure as a  
Means of Coping with Reality



# A DESIRE



50%

Cope

*"Needed a break from all  
the stuff happening in my  
life"*

38%

Fun

*"I thought... it would be  
something fun to do with  
friends."*

33%

Influence

*"My ex was into this stuff"*

8%

Other

*"Just for the sake of it"*

# AN ESCAPE

58%

Distracted from  
the Worries



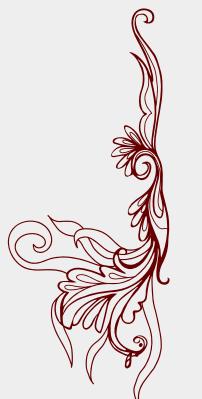
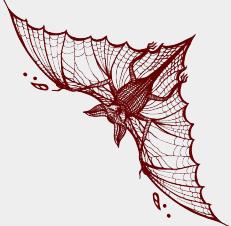
*"It is fun because you can escape your problems and just ridicule at random, imaginary, scary stuff."*

46%

Immersed and  
Escaped

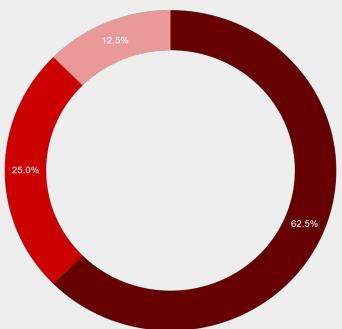


*"...it acted as an ominous escape of sorts"*



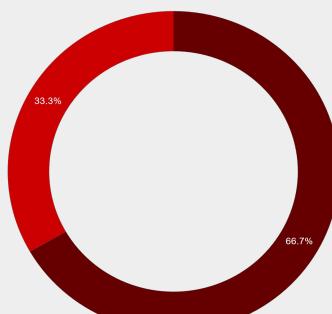
# A FEELING

- Mentally Overwhelmed
- Euphoric/Relieved
- Other



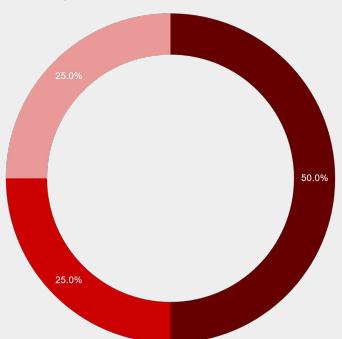
*"traumatized"*

- Enjoyed the Stress
- Didn't Enjoy the Stress



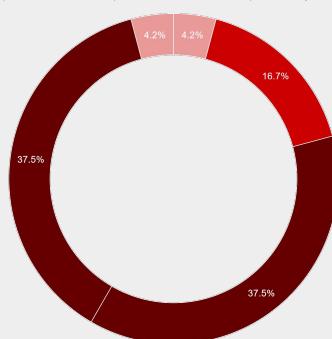
*"confused"*

- Relive the Experience
- Indifferent to the Emotion
- Uncertain



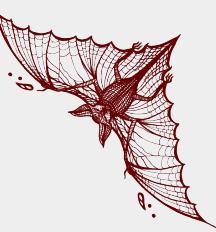
*"thoroughly  
disgusted"*

- 1 (Not Relieved at all)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 (Extremely Relieved)

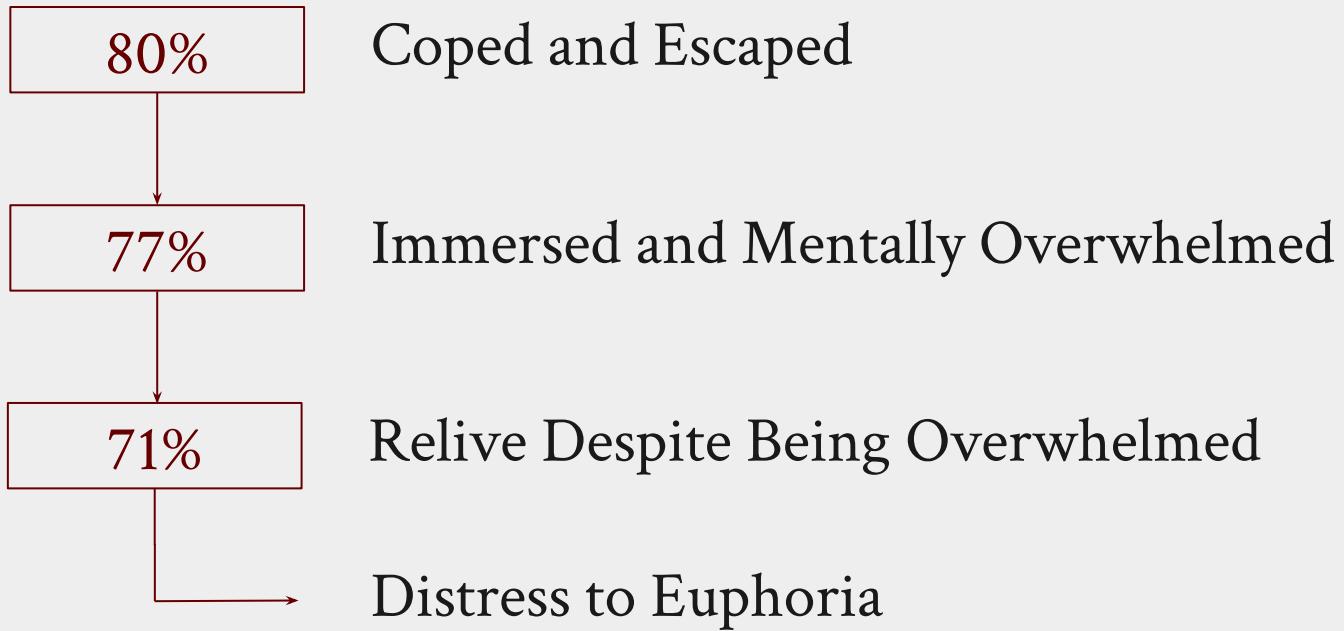


*"unsettled"*

# INSIGHTS



# INSIGHTS



# CONCLUSION

The psychological horror genre of media, though disturbing, leads to euphoria and momentary escape from reality. This feeling of entertainment makes us want to keep seeking and consuming such content.



# REFERENCES

- <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1368430212471738>
- <https://academic.oup.com/ct/article-abstract/14/4/388/4110468>
- <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0304422X01000377>
- <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1368430212471738>
- <https://dl.acm.org/doi/abs/10.1145/2858036.2858227>

# THANKS!

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