

## Factors Influencing Doomscrolling Behavior in Generation Z College Students Social Media Users: Scoping Review

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### ABSTRACT

*The development of social media in Generation Z students presents the phenomenon of doomscrolling, which is the tendency to excessively search for negative content or news that impacts mental health. This study aims to map the factors that affect doomscrolling behavior in Generation Z students who use social media through scoping reviews. Article searches were conducted on PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar using the PCC (Population, Concept, Context) framework, covering the period 2015–2025, with inclusion criteria for empirical articles in Indonesian or English that are available in full text. A total of 12 articles met the criteria and were analyzed descriptively. The results of the review showed that doomscrolling was influenced by psychological factors (stress, anxiety, depression, psychological distress, insomnia), cognitive-behavioral factors (Fear of Missing Out, social media addiction, intensity of use, digital multitasking), personal factors (self-control, self-efficacy, emotion regulation, neurotic personality), and socio-technological factors (low social support and social media algorithms that reinforce exposure to negative content). Doomscrolling has consistently been associated with decreased mental well-being and increased emotional fatigue. These findings confirm the importance of digital literacy interventions, emotion regulation training, and strengthening self-control for Generation Z students.*

**KEYWORDS** Digital mental health; Doomscrolling; Generation Z



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### INTRODUCTION

Advances in digital technology have brought significant changes to the way humans communicate and consume information, especially among generation Z known as digital natives (Nakhla, 2025). Social media is now an integral part of the daily lives of Generation Z college students, who use it not only for entertainment, but also to obtain information and build social connections (Lee, 2023). However, behind its benefits, social media also gives birth to new phenomena that have the potential to have a negative impact on mental health, one of which is doomscrolling (Usman, Huma, & Akbar, 2025).

Doomscrolling is defined as a person's tendency to keep browsing (Scroll) negative news or content on social media, even if the behavior evokes negative emotions such as anxiety, stress, or mental fatigue (Satıcı, Gocet Tekin, Deniz, & Satıcı, 2023). This behavior is often unnoticed and can lead to a cycle of information addiction that is difficult to control. In the context of students, doomscrolling is becoming increasingly relevant because this age group tends to be active on social media and has a high level of curiosity about social, political, and global issues (Lu Yang, Tan, Lang, Wang, & Li, 2024).

Research shows that doomscrolling is closely related to various psychological factors such as fear of missing out (FOMO), social media addiction, loneliness, stress, and sleep disorders (Satıcı et al., 2023). In addition, factors of the digital environment such as social

media algorithms that repeatedly display emotional content and negative news also reinforce habits doomscrolling (Nakhla, 2025). On the other hand, research in Indonesia found that students who frequently doomscrolling Shows increased levels of anxiety as well as digital fatigue (Adib Al Wafa, Samekto Darungan, Akbar, & Zorayatamin Damanik, 2024).

Generation Z college students are the most vulnerable group to this behavior, as they spend an average of more than three hours per day browsing social media (Faunesya & Ardoni, 2025). According to recent data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), approximately 98% of Generation Z (ages 18-24) are active social media users, with the majority accessing platforms multiple times daily (Nurbaiti, 2023). This pattern of use is often passive and triggered by negative emotions or stress, which can ultimately interfere with mental health and academic productivity (Elhai, Yang, & Montag, 2019). Specifically, studies have documented that Indonesian college students who engage in doomscrolling report significantly higher rates of academic procrastination, sleep disturbances, and symptoms of depression compared to their peers with more regulated media consumption patterns. Therefore, it is important to map out what factors influence behavior doomscrolling so that more effective mental health intervention and promotion strategies can be designed among students (Sa'idah & Aryani, 2025).

However, until now there have not been many studies that have systematically reviewed and mapped the factors that contribute to doomscrolling behavior. Most studies are still separate and focus on one specific variable, such as FOMO or social media addiction. While individual studies have examined isolated aspects of this phenomenon, no comprehensive synthesis exists that integrates the psychological, behavioral, personal, and socio-technological dimensions of doomscrolling specifically among Generation Z college students. This gap is particularly significant given that this demographic represents a unique cohort—they are the first generation to have grown up entirely within the digital age, making their relationship with social media qualitatively different from previous generations. Furthermore, existing research has primarily focused on Western populations, with limited attention to Asian contexts where social media usage patterns and cultural attitudes toward digital consumption may differ substantially. Thus, a scoping review is needed to identify, classify, and map empirical evidence related to factors that influence doomscrolling behavior in Generation Z students who use social media.

The novelty of this scoping review lies in its comprehensive, integrated approach to mapping the multidimensional factors influencing doomscrolling behavior among Generation Z college students. Unlike previous studies that examine isolated variables, this review synthesizes evidence across psychological, cognitive-behavioral, personal, and socio-technological domains to provide a holistic understanding of this emerging digital phenomenon. Furthermore, this review uniquely incorporates both international and Indonesian literature, offering cross-cultural insights into doomscrolling patterns that have not been systematically examined in prior research. By identifying the complex interplay between emotional distress, digital addiction, self-regulation capacity, and algorithmic reinforcement, this study advances theoretical understanding beyond existing frameworks that treat doomscrolling as a simple behavioral issue. The integration of findings across diverse methodological approaches—from quantitative correlational studies to mediation analyses—provides a robust evidence base for

understanding causal pathways and intervention points that have been previously unexplored in the literature.

This scoping review provides a comprehensive overview of the determinants of doomscrolling behavior from psychological, social, and technological perspectives, and helps identify research gaps that have not been explored extensively. Based on this background, this study formulates several main questions, namely the factors that influence doomscrolling behavior in Generation Z students, the psychological factors that are most often associated with this behavior, the contribution of social and environmental factors, the influence of technology and the characteristics of social media platforms, and how to distribute the methodology, respondent characteristics, and the main findings of previous studies.

This study aims in general to map various factors that affect doomscrolling in generation Z students who use social media, with a specific goal of identifying relevant psychological, social, environmental, and technological factors; describe the design, methods, and results of studies related to doomscrolling; as well as finding research gaps for further studies in the field of digital mental health. This research is theoretically useful by enriching the literature on the digital behavior of Generation Z and providing the basis for the development of a conceptual model of doomscrolling. Practically, the results can be used by psychiatric nursing practitioners, health educators, and other professionals to develop digital literacy programs and preventive mental health interventions. In terms of policy, the findings of this research can be a reference for universities in designing digital media-based mental health promotion policies and academic stress management strategies for generation Z students.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a scoping review methodology following the framework established by the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) for evidence synthesis. The scoping review approach was selected as most appropriate for this research because it allows for comprehensive mapping of existing literature across diverse study designs and methodological approaches, identification of key concepts and knowledge gaps, and synthesis of evidence on an emerging topic where the body of literature is heterogeneous. Unlike systematic reviews that focus on specific, well-defined research questions with stringent inclusion criteria, scoping reviews provide broader coverage suitable for exploring the multifaceted nature of doomscrolling behavior.

The review was conducted systematically using the PCC (Population, Concept, Context) framework recommended by JBI for scoping reviews. The population of interest was defined as Generation Z individuals (born 1997-2012, ages 18-25 years during the study period) who are college or university students. The concept examined was doomscrolling behavior and its associated factors, including psychological, behavioral, personal, and socio-technological determinants. The context encompassed digital platforms and social media environments, specifically platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Twitter/X, Facebook, and online news portals. This framework guided all stages of the review process from search strategy development through analysis and synthesis.

The data search method in this study was carried out by searching scientific articles from PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar databases. These databases were selected to ensure

comprehensive coverage of both indexed, peer-reviewed literature (PubMed and Scopus) and gray literature including theses and Indonesian-language publications (Google Scholar). The search employed English and Indonesian keywords compiled based on the PCC framework from JBI. The search strategy utilized a combination of Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) with specific syntax adapted to each database's requirements. The English search string included: ("doomscrolling" OR "doom scrolling" OR "problematic social media use" OR "compulsive news consumption" OR "negative content consumption") AND ("Generation Z" OR "Gen Z" OR "college students" OR "university students" OR "young adults" OR "emerging adults") AND ("factors" OR "determinants" OR "predictors" OR "correlates" OR "influences"). The Indonesian equivalent search terms included: ("doomscrolling" OR "konsumsi konten negatif" OR "kecanduan media sosial") AND ("Generasi Z" OR "mahasiswa" OR "dewasa muda") AND ("faktor" OR "pengaruh" OR "determinan").

The focus of the population is Generation Z students who use social media, with the main concept of doomscrolling behavior and the context of using digital platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Twitter/X, and online news portals. The publication range was limited to 2015–2025 to ensure relevance to current digital behavior patterns and capture the emergence of doomscrolling as a recognized phenomenon, which gained prominence particularly during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The starting year of 2015 was chosen because it coincides with the widespread adoption of smartphone-based social media among Generation Z and the maturation of algorithmic content curation systems that contribute to doomscrolling behavior.

Articles were included if they met the following criteria: (1) focused on Generation Z participants or college/university students aged 18-25 years; (2) examined doomscrolling behavior or closely related constructs such as problematic social media use, compulsive news consumption, or excessive negative content consumption; (3) discussed social media platforms or digital news consumption; (4) employed empirical research designs including quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods approaches; (5) were published in English or Indonesian language; (6) were available in full text with open access or through institutional subscriptions; and (7) were published between 2015 and 2025.

Articles were excluded if they: (1) focused exclusively on populations outside the Generation Z age range or non-student populations; (2) did not examine doomscrolling or related digital consumption behaviors; (3) were non-empirical publications such as commentaries, opinion pieces, or theoretical papers without original data; (4) were not available in full text; (5) were published in languages other than English or Indonesian; or (6) had significant methodological limitations that compromised data quality, such as inadequate sampling procedures, lack of validated instruments, or insufficient reporting of methods and results.

All articles found were compiled using a reference manager (Mendeley), and duplicates were systematically removed. The study selection followed a three-stage process aligned with PRISMA guidelines. In Stage 1 (Identification), all retrieved articles were imported into the reference management system and duplicates were removed using both automated and manual checking procedures. In Stage 2 (Screening), two independent reviewers assessed titles and abstracts against the inclusion and exclusion criteria, with disagreements resolved through discussion or consultation with a third reviewer. In Stage 3 (Eligibility), full-text articles of all

potentially relevant studies were obtained and assessed for final inclusion. Articles were then selected through assessment of titles, abstracts, and full content according to the purpose of the research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the twelve articles show that doomscrolling behavior in Generation Z students is a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by psychological, cognitive-behavioral, personal, social, and technological factors. A study on Fear of Missing Out by Elhai et al. (2021) confirms that FoMO is positively associated with problematic smartphone use and is a strong predictor of compulsive digital behavior, including doomscrolling.

Research on the consequences of doomscrolling by Shabahang et al. (2023) shows that the longer an individual consumes negative content, the higher the levels of stress, anxiety, and depression experienced. In addition, Hansya and Ardi (2024) found that psychological distress significantly mediated the influence of doomscrolling on the decline in mental well-being in social media users X among Generation Z, while anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic was shown to increase compulsive smartphone use behavior through FoMO and rumination mechanisms (Elhai et al., 2020).

Personal factors also play an important role, where a meta-analysis by Simsir-Gokalp and Akyurek (2024) shows that low self-control increases problematic social media use, including doomscrolling. The findings are in line with a study on internet addiction in college students that showed that excessive use of social media mediated the relationship between low self-control and digital addiction (Yang, 2020). Cross-country research by Safaria et al. (2024) found that smartphone use mediated the relationship between self-control and emotional dysregulation in forming nomophobia, while a study of digital multitasking by Sinar et al. (2024) showed that although the relationship between self-control and multitasking was weak, the habit of simultaneous media use amplified exposure to negative content.

The validation of the Doomscrolling Scale by Satıcı et al. (2023) also confirms that doomscrolling is positively related to the intensity of social media use, neuroticism, and psychological distress, as well as negatively related to self-control. Furthermore, research on social media addiction by Hou et al. (2019) showed that FoMO and low self-control mediated the negative impact of social media use on psychological well-being. However, research by Rahmayanti and Ambarini (2025) found that self-control had no direct effect on doomscrolling in TikTok users, although it was still negatively related to psychological distress.

In the context of Indonesian students, Syakira et al. (2025) found that the rate of doomscrolling is in the medium category, with males, age groups of 21–24 years, and individuals with a longer duration of daily use having a higher tendency to doomscroll. Overall, these findings confirm that doomscrolling is influenced by the complex interactions between emotional distress, FoMO, intensity of social media use, self-regulation, and algorithmic design of digital platforms that reinforce repeated exposure to negative content.

## Discussion

Elhai, Yang, and Montag (2021) in their article entitled "Fear of Missing Out (FOMO): Overview, theoretical underpinnings, and literature review on relations with severity of negative affectivity and problematic technology use" provide a comprehensive understanding of the concept of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and its relation to the problematic use of



technology, especially social media. This article serves as a theoretical and empirical review that outlines how FOMO is rooted in the human psychological need to stay connected and accepted in a social context, as well as how those needs can develop into compulsive behaviors in the use of digital media.

FOMO is defined as feelings of anxiety or fear of missing out on information, social experiences, or interactions that others may be enjoying. This concept has its roots in Self-Determination Theory (SDT) which emphasizes three basic human psychological needs: relatibility (social connectedness), competence (feeling capable), and autonomy (sense of self-control). When the need for social connectedness is not met, individuals may experience a sense of loss of control over their social experiences, which in turn leads to FOMO. In the context of the digital world, FOMO is a strong trigger for individuals to continue to monitor social media so as not to feel socially left behind.

Elhai and his colleagues highlighted that FOMO has a very close relationship with negative effects such as anxiety, depression, and stress. Individuals with high levels of negative affective disorder are more prone to experiencing FOMO because they seek to reduce anxiety or discomfort by staying connected to social media. This indirectly encourages a pattern of compulsive digital media use, where individuals repeatedly scroll through various platforms to ensure that they are "not left behind." Although this behavior provides a momentary sense of relief, in the long run it actually worsens the emotional state and causes psychological fatigue.

Within the framework of the I-PACE Model (Interaction of Person Affect Cognition Execution) presented in this article, FOMO is positioned as a cognitive-affective factor that mediates the relationship between personality characteristics (such as neuroticism) and problematic social media use behaviors. Individuals with high levels of neuroticism, who tend to be more sensitive to social and emotional threats, are more likely to experience FOMO. As a result, they overuse social media to monitor other people's activities or seek social validation. It is this mechanism that is particularly relevant to the phenomenon of doomscrolling, where a person keeps scrolling through negative news due to emotional urges and social anxiety that are difficult to control.

In addition, the intensity of social media use was also found to be an important variable that was closely related to FOMO. This article shows that the higher a person's FOMO level, the more often he checks social media, the longer the duration of his daily use, and the more likely he is to show signs of digital addiction. This intensive use of social media reinforces the compulsive cycle: the more often a person is exposed, the higher the urge to re-check the latest content, even if the information obtained is negative or emotionally stressful.

Thus, the article Elhai, Yang, and Montag (2021) confirms that FOMO is not only a social phenomenon, but also a psychological mechanism that mediates the relationship between negative emotions, personality, and maladaptive digital behavior. In the context of doomscrolling behavior, FOMO becomes one of the strongest psychological foundations that explains why a person is compelled to keep searching, reading, and scrolling through negative information without being able to stop. FOMO creates an excessive sense of social vigilance, which makes individuals feel the need to always be "up to date," even if it comes at the expense of their mental health.

Overall, the findings in this article provide a solid theoretical basis for understanding how FoMO, negative affect, and intensity of social media use interact with each other to form behavior doomscrolling. FoMO triggers an increase in the intensity of social media use, which in turn reinforces a person's tendency to continue to be exposed to negative news. This pattern suggests the existence of a mutually reinforcing psychological and behavioral circle: social anxiety gives birth FOMO, FOMO encourages excessive use of social media, and excessive use deepens anxiety and behavior doomscrolling itself (Elhai, Yang, & Montag, 2021).

The research conducted by Shabahang and colleagues (2023) is a fundamental study that puts forward the argument that the doomscrolling phenomenon of consuming negative news constantly on social media has significant addictive characteristics. The theoretical basis of this research is negativity bias, which is the cognitive tendency of humans to prioritize and respond more to information that has a negative tone compared to positive information. In the digital realm, this bias triggers individuals to constantly seek out and be exposed to bad news, known as doomscrolling behavior.

To measure the intensity of this behavior empirically, researchers developed the Social Media Doomscrolling Scale (SMDS). Validation of this scale shows that doomscrolling meets the main criteria of addictive behavior, such as worry, craving, tolerance (increased need for exposure), withdrawal symptoms, conflict (interfering with other aspects of life), and relapse.

The findings of this study identify demographic differences in the manifestations of these behaviors:

1. Gender: Men are recorded to have a higher rate of doomscrolling compared to women.
2. Age: Young age groups show significant involvement in negative content consumption behaviors on social media.

In terms of consequences, doomscrolling has been shown to have a serious reciprocal relationship with the psychological state of the individual. These behaviors are negatively correlated with psychological well-being and life satisfaction, but they are positively correlated with maladaptive conditions such as depression, future anxiety, and impulsivity. This indicates that excessive involvement in negative news consumption increases the risk of developing mental health problems. In addition, doomscrolling is also associated with decreased motivation, which shows its impact on self-regulation and daily behavior.

Interestingly, the majority of respondents reported feeling arousal after doomscrolling, rather than numbness. These findings are important because they lead to an understanding that doomscrolling more closely resembles a primary addiction dominated by curiosity and thrill-seeking than simply an escape mechanism from stress.

In summary, the research of Shabahang et al. (2023) confirms that doomscrolling is a complex phenomenon influenced by cognitive biases, emotional needs, and social media usage patterns. The high intensity of social media use is a key factor that exacerbates an individual's tendency to be exposed to negative information, which ultimately adversely affects mental well-being. This research makes an important contribution in strengthening the urgency of digital literacy interventions and the development of self-control skills, especially for the younger generation, to mitigate the psychological risks of continuous exposure to negative information (Shabahang, Kim, Hosseinkhanzadeh, Aruguete, & Kakabaraee, 2023).

The research conducted by Hansya and Ardi (2024) focused on the effect of doomscrolling on mental well-being mediated by psychological distress in social media users X (Twitter) from Generation Z. Using quantitative methods and bootstrapping mediation analysis of 190 respondents aged 18–25 years, this study found that Psychological distress significantly mediates the relationship between doomscrolling and mental well-being. This means that the higher the intensity of a person in doomscrolling, the higher the level of psychological distress experienced, which then decreases his mental well-being.

These findings provide empirical evidence that doomscrolling does not necessarily have a direct impact on mental well-being, but rather the effect works indirectly through psychological distress. This suggests that internal emotional processes such as stress, anxiety, and mental fatigue are the main mechanisms that link negative news-consumption behaviors with decreased psychological well-being.

When compared to the Shabahang et al. (2023) study, both confirm that doomscrolling has a compulsive nature and negatively impacts psychological well-being. However, Shabahang highlighted doomscrolling as a form of digital addictive behavior rooted in biased negativity and arousal-seeking, while Hansya and Ardi emphasized the internal psychological mechanism, namely how stress and emotional distress are the main pathways that worsen well-being. In other words, Shabahang explains "what individuals do and how their behavior is formed", while Hansya and Ardi explain "how these behaviors have an impact on psychological conditions".

On the other hand, the findings of Hansya & Ardi (2024) also expand on the theory from Elhai, Yang, & Montag (2021) about the role of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and problematic technology use in maladaptive digital behavior. Elhai et al. emphasized that FoMO and negative affectations such as anxiety are the main triggers for a person to continue monitoring social media. Hansya and Ardi found further evidence that high involvement in doomscrolling that can also be triggered by FoMO and excessive exposure to social media leads to increased distress and decreased mental well-being. Thus, this study confirms that doomscrolling is not just a behavioral problem, but is the result of a complex interaction between negative emotions, low self-control, and psychological distress due to intensive exposure to digital content.

This study also shows the relevance of the importance of the intensity of social media use as a contextual variable. The results show that Generation Z who use social media X to keep up with the latest news and trends tend to be exposed to negative content more often, resulting in increased anxiety and decreased well-being. This pattern is in line with the Valkenburg study (2022) which shows that excessive use of social media is associated with increased depression and decreased happiness. This also reinforces the results of Elhai et al. (2021) that high social media use deepens the compulsive cycle between social anxiety and FOMO, which ultimately leads to doomscrolling behavior.

Thus, if the study of Elhai (2021) explains the theoretical and emotional foundations of this behavior, Shabahang (2023) explains the behavioral aspects and its addictive characteristics, then Hansya (2024) affirms its psychological impact on mental well-being. The three complement each other and form a complete picture that doomscrolling is a multidimensional psychological phenomenon influenced by negative emotions, excessive



exposure to social media, and failure to self-regulate, especially in Generation Z (Hansya & Ardi, 2024).

Research by Elhai et al. (2020) examined the relationship between anxiety due to the COVID-19 pandemic and problematic smartphone use. Based on data from 908 respondents in China, the study found that anxiety that emerged during the pandemic encouraged individuals to overuse mobile phones as an emotional coping strategy. Individuals with high levels of anxiety and depression tend to seek information more often, update the news, and use social media to reduce the uncertainty they feel. The findings explain that the use of digital media not only serves as a means of communication, but also as a psychological escape from emotional distress, a pattern also seen in doomscrolling behavior.

This study uses a framework I-PACE model (Interaction of Person Affect Cognition Execution) to explain that maladaptive digital behaviors such as doomscrolling is the result of the interaction between personal factors (e.g., negative affectivity and anxiety), cognitive factors (e.g., excessive information searching), and behavioral execution (e.g., use smartphone compulsive). The results showed that emotional distress, specifically general anxiety, had a stronger relationship with the use of smartphone uncontrolled compared to specific anxiety about COVID-19. This indicates that the root of compulsive behavior such as doomscrolling Not only due to external conditions (e.g. pandemics), but also due to an individual's internal tendency to respond to stress and uncertainty. Conceptually, this study shows that negative emotions serve as an early trigger for excessive information-seeking behavior, which can develop into maladaptive habits if not accompanied by good self-control skills (Elhai, Yang, Mckay, & Asmundson, 2020),

In contrast to the study of Elhai et al., Simsir & Akyürek (2024) conducted a meta-analysis of 57 studies that discussed the relationship between self-control and problematic social media use (PSMU), with a total sample of 29,576 participants from various countries. The results of the meta-analysis showed a significant negative relationship between self-control and compulsive social media use behavior ( $r = -0.29$ ), meaning that the lower a person's self-control ability, the higher the tendency to use social media excessively and irregularly The study also confirms that the relationship is consistent across cultures, ages, and genders, suggesting that low self-control is a universal factor in digital addictive behaviors, including doomscrolling.

This study highlights that self-control It plays an important role in regulating the internal drive to continue accessing social media, especially when individuals are in an emotionally unstable state. When self-control is weakened, a person is more easily encouraged to keep scrolling through content or news indefinitely, even though they are aware that it has a negative impact on their psychological well-being. In context doomscrolling, the results of this meta-analysis reinforce the idea that failures in self-regulation are a key factor that allows such behaviors to recur and be difficult to stop. Therefore, interventions aimed at improving self-control such as training mindfulness, screen time management, and techniques self-regulation can be an effective preventive measure to reduce behavior doomscrolling among vulnerable social media users (Simsir-Gokalp & Akyurek, 2024).

Research by Yang (2020) aims to analyze the influence of self-efficacy and self-control on internet addiction in adolescents, with social support as a mediating variable. Using a

correlational descriptive approach based on Bandura's social cognitive theory, this study involved 119 high school students in South Korea. The results showed that self-efficacy and self-control were significantly negatively related to the level of internet addiction, meaning that the higher the individual's confidence in his or her abilities and the better the self-control ability, the lower the tendency to engage in digital addictive behavior. These findings reinforce the view that excessive internet use behavior is not only the result of media exposure, but also of the weak ability of individuals to regulate their own emotions and behaviors when faced with stress or environmental pressure.

In addition, this study reveals that social support plays a partial mediating role in the relationship between internal factors (self-efficacy and self-control) and addictive behavior towards the internet. This means that adolescents who have high social support from peers, family, and teachers tend to be better able to control the urge to continue using the internet. Social support serves as a buffer that helps individuals manage stress, increase their sense of belonging, and reduce the compulsive need to seek emotional escape in the digital world. In the context of doomscrolling behavior, it illustrates that individuals with healthy social networks and strong face-to-face interactions are less likely to get caught up in excessive consumption of negative content on online media.

The findings of Yang (2020) enrich the understanding of digital addictive behavior by confirming that the combination of cognitive and social factors is decisive. Self-control that allows individuals to limit the duration and frequency of internet use, while self-efficacy helps build confidence to be able to stop maladaptive behavior. When these two factors are supported by a positive social environment, the risk of digital compulsive behavior can be significantly reduced. The implications of this study are relevant in the context of doomscrolling, where low self-control and lack of social support can reinforce negative cycles of news consumption, anxiety, and digital attachment. Thus, an intervention strategy that combines strengthening self-control and self-efficacy and increased social support can be an effective step in addressing behavior of doomscrolling among adolescents and young adults (Sun Yi Yang, 2020).

Safaria et al.'s (2024) research focuses on the relationship between self-control, emotional dysregulation, and the intensity of smartphone use, as well as how these contribute to nomophobia, excessive anxiety when unable to access a mobile phone. The study involved 426 students in Indonesia and Malaysia, with a cross-sectional quantitative design. The results of the study showed that smartphone use has a significant mediating role in the relationship between self-control and emotional dysregulation and nomophobia. Individuals with low self-control tend to use smartphones more frequently and for long durations, which ultimately increases the tendency to digital anxiety. In contrast, individuals with poor emotion regulation abilities use mobile phones excessively to avoid or calm negative emotions, reinforcing compulsive behavior patterns that resemble doomscrolling.

These findings show that the intensity of smartphone use is a major factor explaining the increased dependence on digital media and disorders such as nomophobia. This is in line with the self-regulation deficit model theory, which states that the inability to control negative impulses and emotions causes individuals to seek compensation through digital activities, such as relentlessly browsing social media or consuming excessive negative news. Interestingly, this study also found that Malaysian students showed higher levels of nomophobia and smartphone

use than Indonesian students. This difference can be attributed to cultural factors and higher technological penetration in Malaysia, where access to the internet and social media is deeply embedded in daily activities.

In the context of behavior doomscrolling, the results of Safaria et al.'s (2024) research reinforce the argument that self-control (self-control) and the ability to regulate emotions (emotional regulation) plays an important role in limiting the negative impact of excessive use of digital media. Individuals with strong self-control are better able to resist the urge to keep scrolling through negative news or information, while those with good emotional regulation are less likely to use their phones as an emotional escape. Thus, this study provides an in-depth understanding that the behavior of doomscrolling Not only is it influenced by negative content on social media, but also by internal psychological mechanisms and maladaptive digital habits, especially the intensity of use smartphone excessive (Safaria, Wahab, Suyono, & Hartanto, 2024).

The research of Sinar et al. (2024) examined the relationship between self-control and digital media multitasking behavior in K-pop fans in Makassar. The study involved 467 participants aged 18–25 years using the Media Use Questionnaire (MUQ) and a self-control scale adapted from Tangney et al. (2004). The results of the analysis showed that self-control had a significant but weak positive relationship with media multitasking behavior ( $r = 0.124$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). These findings suggest that individuals with high levels of self-control tend to multitask more frequently, not because of an inability to self-regulate, but because multitasking is already part of an efficient digital routine and lifestyle among young people. This change illustrates a shift in the behavior of the digital generation that considers the consumption of many media at once as natural and productive.

This research provides an interesting perspective on the concept of self-control in the context of digital media. Sinar et al. emphasize that multitasking does not always have a negative connotation, because in some individuals, especially early adulthood, media multitasking activities are carried out with a certain awareness and purpose. However, this study also highlights that excessive multitasking can have an impact on focus disorders, increased stress, sleep disorders, as well as the risk of depression and anxiety, as shown by previous studies (Becker et al., 2013; Van der Schurr et al., 2018). Thus, even though the results show a positive correlation, the psychological implications of multitasking still need to be watched out for. This study confirms that self-control remains an important factor in determining whether a person's digital behavior will be adaptive or maladaptive.

In the context of behavior doomscrolling, the findings of Sinar et al. (2024) can be understood as part of a broader dynamic between self-control and the intensity of social media use. Although multitasking is different from doomscrolling, both reflect high digital engagement and are hard to stop. Individuals with self-control may be able to balance the use of media for entertainment or information without getting caught up in compulsive consumption of negative content. On the other hand, individuals with self-control low potential shift from multitasking productive to maladaptive behaviors such as doomscrolling, where excessive exposure to negative information leads to emotional exhaustion. Therefore, this study reinforces previous findings that self-control Doubles as both a protector and a trigger

depending on the context and how the individual interprets their digital interactions (Sinar, Thalib, & Gismin, 2024).

The research conducted by Satıcı et al. (2023) is one of the comprehensive studies that seeks to empirically test the concept of doomscrolling through three separate studies. The main objective of this study is to develop and test the validity and reliability of the Doomscrolling Scale (DS), as well as analyze the relationship between doomscrolling behavior and personality, social media addiction, fear of missing out (FOMO), psychological distress, and subjective well-being. The results of the confirmation factor and reliability analysis showed that this scale is valid and reliable for measuring doomscrolling behavior, both in the 15-item version and in the shortened 4-item version, which strengthens the methodological foundation for further research.

From the aspect of influencing factors, the results of Study II in this study confirm that doomscrolling has a significant positive relationship with social media addiction, FOMO, and the intensity of social media use (daily hours of use). This means that the higher a person's addiction to social media and the greater the fear of missing out (FOMO), the greater the individual's tendency to continue to search for negative content compulsively. In addition, neurotic personalities are strong predictors of doomscrolling behavior, while conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness are negatively associated with these behaviors. This illustrates that individuals who are more emotional, easily anxious, and have difficulty controlling impulses are more susceptible to doomscrolling behavior than those who have better self-control, responsibility, and social attitudes. Thus, psychological factors (neuroticism and FOMO) and behavioral factors (intensity of social media use) are important predictors in the formation of doomscrolling habits.

Furthermore, the results of Study III show that doomscrolling negatively impact psychological well-being, life satisfaction, and harmony in life, with psychological distress as the main mediator of the relationship. Individuals who engage in doomscrolling behavior experience increased anxiety, depression, and stress, which ultimately lowers their levels of well-being and emotional balance. In other words, doomscrolling Not only does it have to do with behavioral and personality factors, but it also worsens a person's psychological condition and quality of life. This reinforces previous findings by Buchanan et al. (2021) that repeated exposure to negative news on social media decreases positive affectation and increases distress. The overall results of the research of Satıcı et al. (2023) confirm that the behavior of doomscrolling multidimensional is influenced by the intensity of social media use, digital addiction, FOMO, and certain personality traits, and carry serious consequences for the mental health of the individual (Satıcı et al., 2023).

The research of Hou et al. (2019) aimed to investigate the impact of social media addiction on students' mental health and academic performance, as well as assess the role of self-esteem as a mediator in these relationships. This study shows that social media addiction is significantly negatively correlated with mental health and academic performance. The higher the level of dependence on social media, the lower the psychological well-being and learning achievement. This is because individuals who are addicted to social media tend to have low self-esteem and weak self-control, which makes them more susceptible to getting caught up in a cycle of compulsive use. This pattern is particularly relevant to doomscrolling behavior, in

which individuals repeatedly scroll through negative content without being able to stop it despite being aware of its adverse impact on emotions and productivity.

The study also found that self-esteem acts as a partial mediator between social media addiction and mental health. This means that dependence on social media not only directly decreases psychological well-being, but also weakens an individual's self-esteem, which in turn worsens mental states. These findings reinforce the understanding that digital addiction and compulsive behaviors such as doomscrolling are not only related to the length of time of use, but also to underlying psychological conditions, such as low self-esteem and lack of self-control. Individuals with low self-esteem are more prone to seeking social validation through digital media, including by constantly reading negative news or uploads that create a sense of emotional involvement, even if it is detrimental to their mental state.

In addition, Hou et al. (2019) also involved a study of intervention-based cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) Simple to lower social media addiction rates. The results of the intervention showed significant improvements in psychological well-being, self-esteem, and sleep quality, as well as a clear decrease in digital addictive behaviors. These findings provide important implications for behavior doomscrolling: that cognitive-behavioral strategies that focus on self-awareness, reflection on digital habits, and strengthening self-control can effectively reduce the tendency to compulsively consume negative content. Thus, this study not only shows the relationship between the intensity of social media use and mental well-being, but also offers practical solutions that can be applied in the context of psychosocial interventions to reduce the negative impact of behavior doomscrolling in the younger generation (Hou, Xiong, Jiang, Song, & Wang, 2019).

Research conducted by Humaidah and Ambarini (2025) highlights the relationship between self-control, psychological distress, and doomscrolling behavior in TikTok users aged 18–25 years. The study found that self-control had no significant effect directly or indirectly on doomscrolling, and psychological distress did not mediate the relationship. However, there was a significant negative association between self-control and psychological distress, suggesting that individuals with high self-control tended to have lower levels of psychological distress. These results show that while self-control is important in maintaining emotional stability, this factor is not always the main determinant in the emergence of doomscrolling behavior, especially on platforms that have a quick recommendation system like TikTok.

The findings enrich previous literature showing that doomscrolling is a multidimensional phenomenon. In the context of previous research, such as Elhai et al. (2021) and Satici et al. (2023), emotional distress and the urge to keep negative information up to date are often the main triggers for this behavior. However, the results from Humaidah and Ambarini (2025) confirm that the role of self-control may be contextual, depending on the characteristics of the platform and the user's digital consumption patterns. This means that individuals with high self-control still have the potential to do doomscrolling when exposed to highly interesting algorithms or situations of high social stress, such as political issues, global crises, or pandemics.

When compared to previous research, this article reinforces the view that doomscrolling is not only influenced by intrapersonal factors such as self-control, but also by emotional and situational factors, including psychological pressure, digital habits, and coping mechanisms.



Humaidah and Ambarini (2025) suggest that interventions to reduce doomscrolling It's not enough to just focus on improving self-control, but it needs to involve a psychoeducational and digital literacy approach that fosters awareness of the impact of negative content. Thus, this study makes an important contribution that self-control have an indirect relationship with behavior doomscrolling through the regulation of emotions and distress, but the effect can be moderated by social context and characteristics platform social media itself (Rahmayanti & Ambarini, 2025).

The research of Naila & Rahmawati (2025) aims to analyze the level of doomscrolling behavior among students who use social media in Indonesia, as well as to look at differences based on gender, age, and duration of social media use. Using a descriptive quantitative approach, this study involved 490 active students from various universities in Indonesia. The results showed that the majority of respondents were in the medium (40.8%) doomscrolling category, followed by the low (35.3%) and high (17.6%) categories. These findings indicate that doomscrolling behavior is quite common among college students, but has not yet reached a serious addictive level. However, student groups with high levels of doomscrolling are still at risk of experiencing psychological well-being disorders due to excessive exposure to negative content on social media.

Furthermore, the study found that men had higher doomscrolling scores than women, with an average score of 39.43 for men and 37.75 for women. Additionally, the 21–24 year old age group shows the highest rate of doomscrolling among other age categories. The results also showed that the duration of social media use was positively correlated with the rate of doomscrolling, the longer the time spent surfing social media every day, the higher the individual's tendency to continue scrolling and consuming negative content. These findings are in line with the results of Shabahang et al. (2023) and Satıcı et al. (2023) who show that the intensity of social media use and the addictive nature of digital play an important role in reinforcing doomscrolling behavior. Thus, this behavior is not just a habit of reading the news, but has become a digital consumption pattern that is difficult to control, especially among young people.

This research makes an important contribution in expanding the understanding of doomscrolling as a complex digital phenomenon. Demographic factors such as gender and age, along with the duration of social media use, have been shown to play a role in increasing the tendency doomscrolling. These results also support the studies of Elhai et al. (2021) and Humaidah & Ambarini (2025) which highlight the importance of self-control and emotion regulation in preventing excessive negative information consumption behaviors. Thus, this study confirms that the behavior of doomscrolling is the result of an interaction between the intensity of social media use, emotional factors, and an individual's self-control ability. Interventions in the form of improving digital literacy, time management Online, and emotion regulation training can help students manage social media activities more healthily and adaptively (Syakira, Ifdil, & Khairati, 2025).

From the total twelve articles analyzed, it can be concluded that doomscrolling is a maladaptive digital behavior formed from the complex interaction between emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and social factors. Although the term doomscrolling is relatively new, all of the research results show that this behavior has similar characteristics to other forms of

digital addiction, such as problematic social media use and smartphone addiction. This phenomenon not only reflects the habit of seeking information, but also psychological mechanisms in managing anxiety, stress, and uncertainty, especially among Generation Z and students, who are the most vulnerable group to digital pressure due to the high intensity of social media use.

The most dominant and consistent factor found in various studies is the intensity of social media use. The study of Satici et al. (2023) and Naila & Rahmawati (2025) both confirms that the higher the duration and frequency of social media use, the greater the tendency of a person to get caught up in doomscrolling behavior. These findings are also reinforced by Hou et al. (2019) and Safaria et al. (2024), who explain that excessive use of social media can cause symptoms of addiction, decrease self-control, and increase psychological distress. In general, the duration of social media use acts as an "entry point" that reinforces the relationship between internal psychological factors (such as stress and FOMO) and doomscrolling behavior.

In addition, the emotional factor is the second most influential aspect. Research by Elhai et al. (2020) and Hansya & Ardi (2024) confirms that psychological distress, anxiety, and depression play an important role in encouraging individuals to continue consuming news or negative content as a form of emotional escape. This is in line with Shabahang et al. (2023) who found that doomscrolling is positively correlated with depression and anxiety about the future. In other words, doomscrolling is often a manifestation of coping with psychological distress, but it actually worsens the emotional state as individuals continue to be exposed to negative news. This cycle strengthens the theory of the I-PACE model (Elhai, 2020), which explains that digital addictive behavior occurs when personal factors (negative emotions) and cognitive factors (excessive information searching) reinforce each other.

The third factor that plays a big role is self-control. Several studies such as Simsir & Akyürek (2024), Yang (2020), and Safaria et al. (2024) have found that low self-control is a strong predictor of compulsive digital behavior. Individuals with low self-control are more likely to get caught up in doomscrolling because it is difficult to stop the urge to keep scrolling through content, despite being aware of the impact. However, the results of Humaidah & Ambarini (2025) show that the effect of self-control on doomscrolling is not always immediate, but can be mediated by emotional distress or even influenced by the context of the social media platform used. This suggests that self-control is dynamic and contextually effective for some individuals, but can lose its effect in high-stress situations or when social media algorithms are very emotionally appealing.

In addition to these three main factors, additional factors such as Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), personality, and social support also appear. Studies by Elhai et al. (2021) and Satici et al. (2023) show that FOMO and neurotic personality traits reinforce doomscrolling tendencies, while self-efficacy and social support (Yang, 2020) can be protective that lower the risk of such behaviors. These factors act as predisposing variables that determine the extent to which individuals are able to resist compulsive urges to negative information.

In general, all the results of the study illustrate that doomscrolling does not arise from a single cause, but is the result of an interaction between:

1. Emotional factors (distress, anxiety, depression),

2. Cognitive and behavioral factors (FOMO, intensity of social media use, digital addiction),
3. Personal factors (self-control, self-efficacy), and
4. Social factors (social support and digital environment).

The integration of findings from the entire article reinforces the conclusion that doomscrolling behavior is a new form of psychological maladaptation in the digital age, which can worsen mental well-being if not managed properly. Therefore, increasing digital literacy, emotion regulation training, and mindfulness-based interventions are needed to help students and the younger generation control their information consumption. This strategy not only reduces doomscrolling tendencies, but also strengthens psychological resilience to negative exposure in cyberspace.

## CONCLUSION

Doomscrolling is a maladaptive digital behavior influenced by the interplay of emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and social factors, particularly affecting Generation Z college students with intense social media use. It goes beyond merely consuming negative news, serving as a psychological response to stress, anxiety, and uncertainty. Key factors include emotional triggers like stress and depression; cognitive-behavioral elements such as Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), social media addiction, and heavy digital engagement; personal traits including self-control and emotion regulation; and social influences like support networks and algorithm-driven exposure to negative content. This multidimensional behavior significantly harms mental health by lowering psychological well-being and increasing emotional exhaustion. Future research should explore tailored interventions that combine digital literacy, emotion regulation training, and self-control enhancement, focusing on longitudinal effects and diverse populations within Generation Z to better inform preventive strategies.

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