

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SDGs AND PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH



**Topic: Doomscrolling Dilemma: Understanding
doomscrolling behaviour and psychological
wellbeing.**

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Abstract

In today's world where every geopolitical conflict and economic uncertainty reaches smartphones within seconds, staying informed has become easier than ever-but disengaging has become increasingly difficult. With constant updates surrounding Operation Sindhoor to growing debates on artificial intelligence and job displacement, young people today are exposed to an unprecedented stream of information that demands constant attention. Although social media and digital platforms have led to increases in the level of awareness and connectivity across society, they have also led to the creation of the phenomenon known as doomscrolling, which describes the compulsively consuming of negative or distressing online content. The purpose of this study is to examine the characteristics, causes, and effects of doomscrolling behaviours among members of Generation Z (Gen. Z), who were born into a digitally-connected world where smartphones, social networks, and readily-available real-time flows of information originate from different locations around the globe. The study uses relevant contemporary case studies and examines how people's engagement with social media has been influenced by uncertainty-driven digital engagement and how this has changed their patterns of information consumption and impacted their overall well-being.

Keywords: Doomscrolling, Generation Z, Wellbeing, Digital Addiction, Digital Dissociation, Psychological distress.

Introduction

In the Economic Survey 2025–26, the Government of India identified digital addiction as a growing threat to the country's youth, warning that excessive engagement with digital platforms contributes to mental health challenges, declining productivity, and social isolation. The survey found that mobile phone use and internet usage are now virtually universal among 15–29-year-olds, and that young users are becoming more reliant on social media, are more likely to scroll without purpose, and more likely to compare themselves to others based on their use of social media. In addition, these behaviours create higher levels of anxiety and depression, as well as lower self-esteem, greater difficulties sleeping, and higher rates of social withdrawal. Taken together, these findings paint a picture of a mental health crisis within an increasing connected world. ([India, 2025-2026](#))

Generation Z faces this most acutely. The internet wasn't something they had to learn or adjust to it was just there from start, which is probably why everyone calls them the first true digital natives. Scroll through any feed and you'll hit war coverage, economic bad news, climate disasters, health scares, protests all curated by an algorithm deciding what you see next. The Russia-Ukraine war hasn't stopped. Tensions in the Middle East keep climbing. Climate-related disasters aren't slowing down either, and the economic outlook isn't doing much to reassure anyone. Young people absorb all of it in real time, and it's changed something basic about how they process the world ([Seydi Ahmet Satici, 2022](#)).

There's an obvious upside here too- informed, engaged young citizens don't happen by accident and constant access to information helps that. Still, researchers keep landing on the same problem: content like this doesn't

really let up, and that takes a toll. Stress climbs. So does anxiety. Somewhere in all of it, people end up emotionally worn down, with their overall sense of well-being quietly taking the hit (Satici, 2022). What's worth digging into, really, is that tension itself between wanting to stay informed and needing to stay okay and how today's digital spaces are quietly rewriting what growing up online actually looks like.

Review Literature and Identification of Literature Gap

Literature Review

Conceptualizing Doomscrolling

Technology has changed how we take in information, and doomscrolling has become a genuine area of scholarly interest, especially since it gained mainstream recognition during COVID-19. The term's roots go back to "doomsurfing" the older habit of actively searching out distressing news and crisis coverage online. (Buchaman, 2021) traces how, once digital media environments moved from search-based interfaces toward algorithmically curated feeds, the behavior itself change people stopped seeking information on purpose and started scrolling continuously through streams of negative content instead. That shift is what produced doomscrolling as we now understand it.

As this phenomenon is increasing in popularity, researchers are trying more than ever to provide an explicit conceptualization of doomscrolling. It is generally defined as the compulsive and repetitive consumption of negative, distressing, or crisis-oriented information through digital platforms despite the emotional discomfort such content may generate. (Seydi Ahmet Satici, 2022) draws a useful line between this and normal news consumption: doomscrollers struggle to stop, even while feeling pulled toward the next update. People keep going even when they know it's not doing them any good, and Satici argues this is what pushes the behaviour past ordinary curiosity or information seeking.

Not everyone agrees, though, on what exactly makes doomscrolling harmful. Much of the earlier literature treats time online as the key variable, but that assumption has taken some hits recently. (Clayborne ZM, 2025) discussion in (David Stepien, 2026) narrative review, argue that the link between screen time and mental health doesn't really come down to hours logged at all. What seems to matter more is how that time gets used actively, passively, socially, or alone. That's a fairly important reframing. It suggests doomscrolling isn't harmful just because more of the time is spent on negative content, but because of something built into the behaviour itself: its resistance to being stopped, regardless of how long someone's actually online. In that sense doomscrolling looks quite different from "dopamine scrolling," which tends to be about pleasure or reward rather than threat. (Kaya, 2024) frames it instead as a form of threat monitoring, an attempt to cut down on uncertainty and regain some sense of control when things feel unstable.

Large scale disruption seems to have made these motivations stronger. As people lean more on digital media for updates and reassurance, events like COVID-19, ongoing conflict, economic instability, and climate change have pushed audiences toward digital platforms as their default news source. Doomscrolling, seen this way, isn't purely an individual habit anymore it's also shaped by interconnected information ecosystems that keep generating updates, curating content algorithmically, and exposing people to distressing news almost

continuously. It sits at the intersection of technology, information consumption, and psychological wellbeing, which makes it a useful lens for thinking about how younger people engage with digital tools more generally.

Digital Engagement, Screen Time and Content Consumption

Early research linking mental health to digital technology mostly used screen time as stand in for psychological risk. Heavy smartphone use, frequent social networking, and lots of online news consumption were all repeatedly tied to anxiety, depression, and lower wellbeing. But treating screen time as one undifferentiated block hasn't held up especially well once researchers looked closer. (Rebecca Godard, 2024) ran a meta-analysis covering 141 studies and close to 145,000 participants, and found that most effect sizes linking active and passive social media use to wellbeing were negligible. Similarly (Damodar, 2022) distinguished between active and passive forms of social media participation, arguing that they have different implications for psychological well-being. Active participation, such as communicating with friends, sharing content, and engaging in online communities, is associated with stronger social connections and increased emotional support. In contrast, passive participation including scrolling through news feeds, viewing others' posts, and consuming content without direct interaction has been linked to higher levels of anxiety, depression, and lower self-esteem. These findings complicate the common assumption that passive social media engagement inevitably results in poorer mental health outcomes. Rather, they suggest that the relationship between social media use and psychological well-being is more complex than previously believed.

Primary studies back up this move toward more specific, outcome-based measurement. (Guo Jinghua, 2025) ran both a survey (N = 500) and a four-week experiment (N = 200) using the GAD-7 for anxiety and PHQ-9 for depression, comparing adolescents placed in active versus passive use conditions. After the four weeks, the passive group scored noticeably higher on both anxiety (GAD-7 M = 7.3) and depression (PHQ-9 M = 7.8) than the active group (GAD-7 M = 4.5; PHQ-9 M = 4.7), along with higher loneliness. This is fairly convincing experimental evidence sustained, non-interactive engagement, which is basically the behavioural core of doomscrolling, can produce measurable anxiety increases over time, sidestepping some of the causal murkiness that cross-sectional studies can't get around. Set next to Godard and Holtzman's (2024) warning, a more careful claim starts to take shape: it's probably not passive use broadly that predicts distress, but sustained passive engagement with negative or crisis content specifically which isn't the same thing as passively scrolling through a friend's vacation pictures.

(Seydi Ahmet Satıcı, 2022) adds another piece here, arguing that metrics like likes, comments, and follower counts increasingly act as stand-ins for social approval among younger users, which could drive distress on its own, apart from raw screen time. (Liu, 2026) five-year analysis of a global adult sample (N = 3,000, 2020 to 2024) puts an actual number on the dose-response relationship: each extra hour of daily screen time corresponded to a 0.30-point increase on a 10-point anxiety scale ($p < .001$), and each extra hour of social media use specifically added 0.25 points ($p < .001$), after controlling for demographics and perceived stress. What stands out most in Liu's data is sleep. Each additional hour of sleep was tied to a 0.36-point drop in anxiety, and sleep didn't moderate the screen time-anxiety relationship at all. Liu reads this as evidence that

sleep works as a mediator rather than a buffer screen exposure disrupts sleep, and disrupted sleep raises anxiety in turn. This is mechanism doomscrolling research hasn't really engaged with yet. Rather than being a direct cause of distress, screen time may function more like a conduit, one that partly runs through a physiological pathway that researchers studying doomscrolling specifically still haven't taken very seriously.

Information Overload and Algorithmic Amplification

Facebook and Twitter (now X) have become primary news sources for a lot of people, but the sheer volume of content moving through these platform leaves many users feeling overwhelmed. This is what's generally called information overload: taking in more than a person can reasonably process, which leads to mental exhaustion, emotional fatigue, and trouble making decisions. (Muhtar, 2025) connects this to crisis and disaster reporting specifically, arguing that the nonstop stream of updates young people get during emergencies, conflicts, or public health crises makes this sense of overload worse.

Platform design often gets blamed for keeping doomscrolling going, and Liu's (2026) Digital Ecological Stress Model gives a more layered explanation of why that might be true. At the micro level, individual patterns of screen use and sleep loss shape emotional regulation directly. At the meso level, digital social environments structure how people compare themselves, evaluate their lives, and perceive support. At the macro level, the post-pandemic environment has normalized constant connectivity in ways that could amplify stress regardless of any single app's specific design. This is a useful check on narrower explanations that blame doomscrolling on isolated features like infinite scroll or push notifications alone Liu's model suggests these features work together with a much wider behavioural ecology, sleep and social context included, rather than acting as standalone causes.

Muhtar (2025) also draws on negative bias theory here: negative events, thoughts, or emotions, the kind tied to fear or threat, tend to affect wellbeing more strongly than positive ones do. This bias probably has evolutionary roots, with the brain giving more weight to danger than reward simply because that helped with survival. Social media algorithms exploit this tendency by surfacing content that draws more clicks and comments and keeps people on the platform longer. The result is something of a feedback loop constant exposure to crisis narratives pushes people toward more compulsive scrolling and more distress. Gerbner and Gross's Mean World Syndrome model makes a related point, arguing that prolonged exposure to negative media leads people to see the world as more dangerous than it really is. Kaya (2024) adds that when people feel uncertain, they usually go looking for more information to feel back in control, but more negative information rarely actually delivers that control. Mostly, it just raises anxiety further. Put together, information overload, algorithmic amplification, and psychological vulnerability seem to reinforce each other in ways that keep doomscrolling going though how strong and consistent these effects actually are depends a lot on how "use" gets defined and measured in any given study.

Psychological Consequence of Doomscrolling

Anxiety, stress, emotional exhaustion, and depression show up most often as consequences of compulsively consuming negative content, with anxiety getting the most attention by far. [Satici \(2022\)](#) found that habitual doomscrollers report noticeably more distress and less mental wellness than people who don't doomscroll. [Kaya \(2024\)](#) builds on this, arguing that repeated exposure to uncertainty-heavy information raises anxiety and vulnerability especially in people who are already prone to anxious tendencies. Rather than resolving uncertainty, excessive information-seeking tends to just deepen it.

The mechanism connecting passive, negatively-toned consumption to depression specifically has been studied in more depth by [Lin Wang, 2025](#). Their chain-mediation study of 322 college students during COVID-19 found that passive social media use didn't directly predict depression ($\beta = -0.049$, $p > .05$) a null result on the surface. But it did predict depression indirectly, through vicarious traumatization and fear of missing out acting as sequential mediators, together accounting for over 41% of the total effect. This matters because it complicates a simple story where more negative content just equals more distress. Wang instead shows that passively engaging with crisis-related content produces vicarious traumatization an indirect, empathy-based kind of exposure that resembles some features of direct trauma which then feeds FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). It's this compounding chain, not passive consumption by itself, that ends up predicting depressive symptoms. [Buchanan \(2021\)](#) reports something similar in the anxiety domain: even brief exposure to distressing content triggers an immediate negative emotional response, and repeated exposure over time wears down people's ability to just disengage, which feeds into the exhaustion so many describe.

[Satici \(2022\)](#) also links heavy doomscrolling to lower subjective wellbeing and reduced life satisfaction. [Liu \(2026\)](#) takes this further with the idea of “digital dissociation” – state involving emotional numbing, cognitive confusion, a distorted sense of time, and weaker self-regulation, which Liu connects to chronic doomscrolling. The implication is a bit unsettling: spending long stretches immersed in distressing content doesn't just numb someone to the content it can disconnect them from their own emotional experience altogether. Liu's clustering work adds a population-level angle to this. Liu identified a "high-screen/low-sleep" behavioural profile, making up over a third of a global adult sample, that reported the highest mean anxiety score of any cluster ($M = 6.27$, compared to $M = 4.71-4.77$ for the others). Taken together, these findings point away from a simple linear "more content, more distress" model and toward something more like a compounding effect, where negative content exposure, sleep disruption, and weakened self-regulation feed into one another.

Understanding the Drivers of Doomscrolling

A handful of intertwined cognitive, emotional, and behavioural processes seem to drive compulsive negative-content consumption, and they help explain why people keep engaging with it even when it's clearly not helping them. [Satici \(2022\)](#) point to fear of missing out as one of the strongest predictors of doomscrolling an ongoing worry about missing something important. The logic here is fairly simple: fear of missing crisis updates drives

people to check social media and news repeatedly, and that checking gradually becomes compulsive and hard to control.

Intolerance of Uncertainty Theory offers a related explanation: people who struggle to tolerate uncertainty tend to seek out more information to ease their anxiety and feel back in control. As [Kaya \(2024\)](#) notes, the digital environment's constant churn of crisis-related information tends to raise anxiety rather than settle it, even while people are searching for reassurance. [Hughes \(2024\)](#) draws on the I-PACE model to frame doomscrolling as an interaction between individual vulnerability anxiety, neuroticism, social insecurity and situational triggers like platform features and outside stressors.

Taken together, these frameworks suggest doomscrolling is more than plain information-seeking. It's shaped by fear, uncertainty, cognitive bias, and difficulty regulating emotion something [Wang \(2025\)](#) back up empirically by showing that self-efficacy and self-regulation problems, triggered by vicarious traumatization, are what turn passive exposure into a compulsive, FOMO-driven pattern. Exposure by itself doesn't seem to be enough to explain it.

Generation Z as a Vulnerable Population

Gen Z (born 1997-2012), often called the first true generation of digital natives, grew up with information, communication, and social interaction increasingly routed through digital devices. For this group, online platforms are far more than entertainment, [Muhtar \(2025\)](#) argues that this depth of integration makes young people especially prone to compulsive information consumption habits, given how much they rely on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, X, and YouTube for news and social connection platforms that continually expose them to negative and crisis-related content.

[Satici \(2022\)](#) found that young adults report higher FOMO than older adults, which drives them to check digital platforms more often. Since social belonging remains such a central developmental task through adolescence and emerging adulthood, a lot of young people feel pressure to stay constantly connected, even when the content they run into makes them anxious or upset. [Liu's \(2026\)](#) moderation analysis adds some empirical support to this developmental picture: the link between screen time and anxiety, while significant for both age groups, was measurably stronger among adults under 40 ($b = 0.323$) than those 40 and older ($b = 0.265$) a statistically significant interaction Liu reads as evidence of graded, rather than sharply divided, developmental vulnerability.

Social comparison keeps coming up as a theme too. [Jinghua and Sheibani \(2025\)](#) found that adolescents in the passive-use condition scored significantly higher on loneliness and self-comparison related distress which lines up with the border claim that young people exposed to curated portrayals of other's lives tend to feel more inadequate and have lower self-esteem. Combined with exposure to crisis-related news, this comparison process seems to raise the odds of compulsive scrolling patterns setting in.

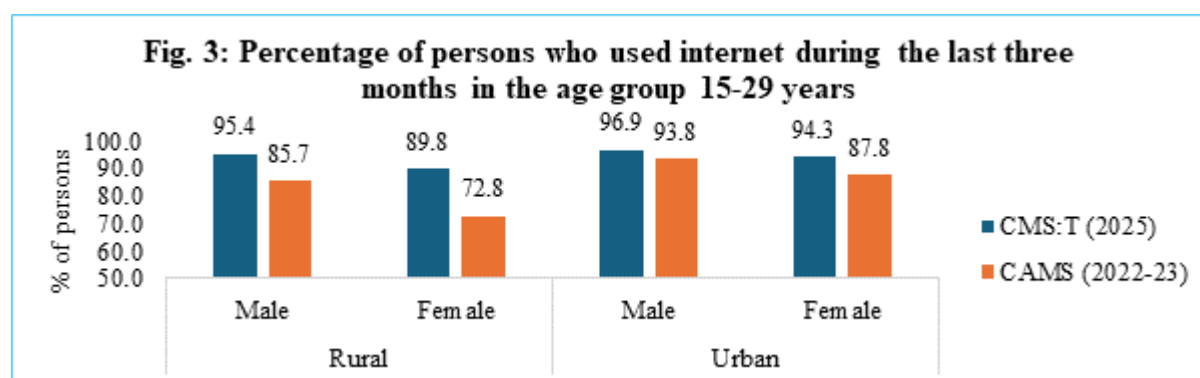
Socio-economic pressure adds to this vulnerability as well. [Muhtar \(2025\)](#) points to academic expectations, career uncertainty, and economic instability as major stressors for young people today, who often turn to social

media during uncertain times looking for information and comfort, only to run into an overwhelming amount of negative content that raises anxiety and pushes them to keep looking. [Stępień \(2026\)](#) narrative review places this within a broader biopsychosocial model: excessive screen exposure works biologically through sleep and circadian disruption, psychologically through social comparison and validation-seeking, and socially through less face-to-face interaction, all at once. Notably, [Stępień \(2026\)](#) also identify physical activity as a partial protective factor against these effects, something largely absent from doomscrolling-specific research so far. Gen Z's vulnerability to doomscrolling, then, isn't just about technology exposure. It comes from the combination of developmental characteristics, social comparison, uncertainty about the future, and how deeply embedded digital media has become in daily life a mix that leaves this generation particularly exposed to the psychological and behavioural costs of taking in large amounts of negative information, even as the exact mechanisms behind these effects keep getting refined by newer, more methodologically careful research

Trends in Digital Media Consumption Among Generation Z

Existing static evidence suggests that Generation Z represents one of the most digitally connected cohorts, characterized by extensive internet usage and increasing dependence on online platforms for information, communication, and social interaction.

Figure 1

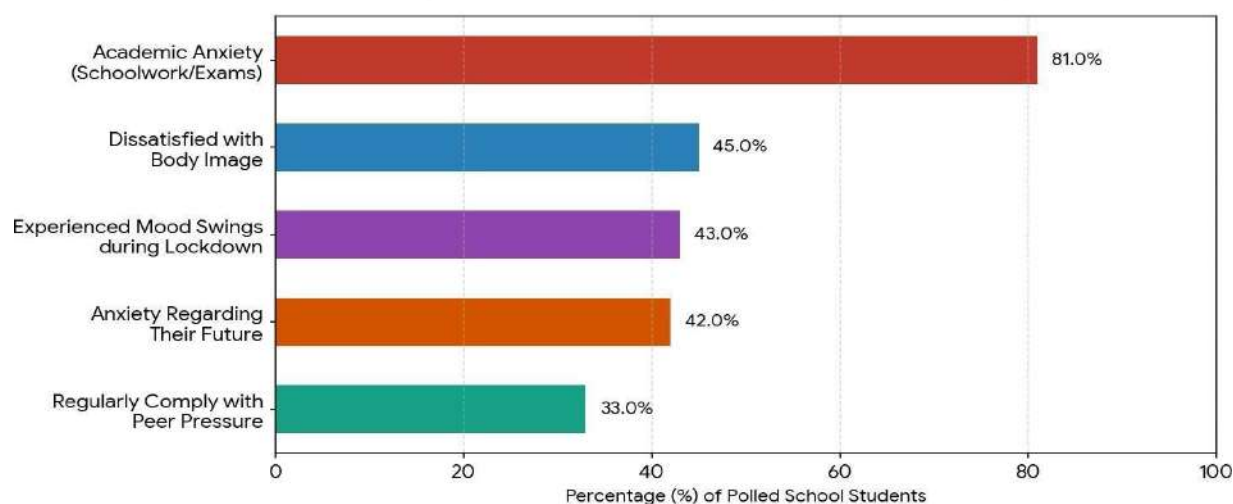


Source: PIB – Comprehensive Modular Survey (Telecom, 2025) (PIB, Comprehensive Modular Survey, 2025)

Figure 1 shows just how widely the internet has been adopted among young Indians, with those aged 15-29 reporting the highest usage levels of any age group. This matters because social media and digital platforms have become primary news sources for many people which means the more time someone spends online, the more exposed they likely are to compulsive information-seeking habits, doomscrolling included.

Figure 2:

Key Parameters of Student Well-being: NCERT 2022 Survey Results



Source: NCERT Survey (2022), cited by UNICEF India (SUREVY, 2025)

Figure 2 points to a growing concern around young people's mental well-being in India, with a notable share of students reporting anxiety, mood swings, and other emotional struggles. Of course, none of this can be pinned entirely on digital media use there are plenty of other factors at play but it does point to a broader climate where mental health has become a real public concern. This backdrop helps explain why a study like this one matters.

Literature Gap

The existing literature has contributed substantially to our understanding of doomscrolling what it is, what drives it, and what consequences it produces. Even so, important gaps remain. Although the psychological consequences of doomscrolling have been examined extensively, this body of work has largely been situated within Western contexts, leaving the Indian digital environment comparatively underexplored despite its distinctive features, such as rapid smartphone adoption, widespread social media use, and socio-political developments that may shape doomscrolling behaviour in markedly different ways. Drawing on contemporary Indian case studies, this study addresses this contextual gap by examining doomscrolling behaviour and its implications for the psychological well-being of Generation Z within the Indian context.

Definition, Objective and Scope of Study

Definition

When this study talks about doomscrolling, it means something specific: the habit of repeatedly seeking out information that's negative or distressing, mostly through social media or online news feeds. It's not just casual scrolling it's a pattern where someone keeps returning to the same sites or feeds, drawn back by crises or bad news, and struggles to pull away from what they're reading even when it's clearly upsetting them. As for Generation Z, the term is generally used for people born somewhere between 1997 and 2012. They came of age alongside the internet, smartphones, and social media all becoming part of daily life at once, which is largely why they're seen as the first generation for whom digital technology was never something new to adapt to it was just there. Digital well-being, in this context, is about how well someone manages their relationship with digital technology whether they're able to stay engaged without it eating into their mental, social, or emotional

health.

Objectives of the Study

To examine the nature and characteristics of doomscrolling as an emerging form of digital behavior among Generation Z.

To identify the individual and technological factors contributing to the development of doomscrolling.

To explore the relationship between doomscrolling and the psychological well-being of Generation Z.

To study, through case studies, how doomscrolling shows up in the Indian context and what social and technological factors shape it among Indian youth.

Scope of the study

This study examines doomscrolling among Generation Z within today's digital landscape, with particular focus on the Indian context. It explores how compulsive exposure to negative online content affects the psychological well-being of young individuals, along with the factors that give rise to this behaviour. The scope is deliberately narrow: rather than attempting to cover the broader territory of problematic internet use or social media addiction, the study concentrates specifically on doomscrolling as a distinct form of digital behaviour. Drawing on contemporary Indian case studies, it offers a contextual understanding of doomscrolling and its implications for Generation Z.

Research Question

Research Problem

Today's digital world has fundamentally changed how Generation Z accesses, consumes, and engages with information. In India, where rapid smartphone adoption, affordable internet services, and widespread social media use have together created one of the world's largest digital populations, young people now find themselves exposed to a near-constant stream of real-time information. This transformation has undoubtedly enhanced awareness and connectivity, but it has also given rise to doomscrolling—the compulsive consumption of distressing or negative online content. Although scholarly interest in this phenomenon has grown considerably, much of the existing research remains centered on Western populations, leaving our understanding of how doomscrolling manifests in the Indian digital context comparatively limited. Against this backdrop, the present study examines doomscrolling behaviour and its implications for the psychological well-being of Generation Z, drawing on contemporary Indian case studies to offer contextual insights into this emerging digital behaviour

Main Research Question

How does doomscrolling affect the psychological well-being of Generation Z particularly within the contemporary Indian digital context?

Related questions

- What are the key characteristics of doomscrolling behaviour among Generation Z?
- What individual and technological factors contribute to the development of doomscrolling behaviour among Generation Z?

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, exploratory research design, relying entirely on secondary data to understand doomscrolling and its implications for the behaviour and psychological well-being of Generation Z. Because the topic is still relatively new to academic research, the study draws on secondary sources rather than original fieldwork peer reviewed journal articles, academic books, government reports, policy documents, and publications from international organizations. Relying on this body of existing work makes it possible to build a fuller picture of doomscrolling, covering not just what it is conceptually, but how it manifests behaviorally and what it means for people's well-being. Literature was gathered through academic databases and scholarly search engines, using search terms like "doomscrolling," "Generation Z," "social media use," "digital well-being," "information overload," and "online information consumption".

From there, the focus narrowed to studies that engaged directly with doomscrolling itself, or with closely related patterns of compulsively consuming negative online content. Accordingly, the study does not involve primary data collection, survey respondents, sampling procedures, or psychometric tools; instead, it draws on the systematic analysis of existing scholarly literature and documentary sources. Once relevant studies were identified, duplicates and sources with little direct bearing on the topic were filtered out. The remaining articles went through a closer screening process based on their titles, abstracts, and full text, and only those offering real substance on what drives doomscrolling, how it plays out behaviorally, its psychological effects, or how people cope with it were kept for analysis. This literature was then analyzed thematically, with key findings grouped into broader categories that helped surface recurring patterns, ongoing debates, and gaps in the existing scholarship. To add depth beyond what the literature alone could offer, the study also draws on a handful of contemporary case studies, which illustrate how doomscrolling actually shows up in real-world digital environments and offer context for the behaviors and triggers behind it. These case studies, along with the reasoning for selecting them, are discussed in more detail in the next section.

Manifestations of Doomscrolling in the Contemporary Indian Digital Context

India offers a valuable context for studying this shift in behaviour, since uncertainty arises across very different domains while digital engagement remains the common response. Academic disputes, high-profile criminal cases, and major national events differ widely in substance, yet each generates a steady stream of updates, competing narratives, and unresolved uncertainty. Rather than settling this uncertainty, such conditions tend to drive repeated information-seeking suggesting that doomscrolling is driven less by the nature of the event itself than by how long the uncertainty around it persists

Manifestation 1: Academic Uncertainty and Doomscrolling

The NEET-UG Paper Leak (2024)

Background

The NEET-UG 2024 paper leak began as an examination controversy but soon developed into a prolonged period of academic uncertainty. Over the following weeks, as court hearings, official notices, counselling updates, and media coverage continued to unfold, aspirants turned increasingly to digital platforms to stay informed. This study does not examine the controversy itself; rather, it uses the episode as a lens for understanding how sustained uncertainty shaped doomscrolling behaviour among Generation Z.

Academic Uncertainty as a Behavioral Trigger

The NEET UG case suggests that doomscrolling is driven less by exposure to negative information than by the experience of unresolved uncertainty. Students initially sought reliable updates, but the lack of clear answers led to repeated checking across multiple platforms, so that what began as information-seeking gradually hardened into compulsive engagement.

This finding builds on [Kaya's \(2024\)](#) account of uncertainty-driven doomscrolling, showing that comparable behavioural mechanisms can emerge in educational contexts and not only during broader public crises. [Hughes \(2024\)](#) similarly points to the interplay between individual stress and digital environments; the present case adds to this by suggesting that prolonged institutional uncertainty can, on its own, become a strong enough trigger to sustain compulsive information seeking.

Digital Platform and Behavioural Reinforcement

Official notifications, media reports, coaching institute analyses, and user discussions did not resolve uncertainty so much as continually reproduce it. Rather than acting as separate, isolated sources of information, these platforms together encouraged repeated verification and prolonged engagement.

[Muhtar \(2025\)](#) attributes doomscrolling to information overload, and [Liu \(2026\)](#) emphasizes the role of algorithmic amplification. The NEET-UG case points to a somewhat different dynamic: compulsive engagement here appears to result from the interaction between digital platforms and ongoing institutional uncertainty, rather than from platform design alone.

Behavioral and Psychological Implications

The case also suggests that behavioural reinforcement can precede any visible psychological toll. Many students kept checking for updates even after recognizing that little new information was likely to appear, and this repeated checking gradually became habitual in its own right. Thus, the present case suggests a different sequence: compulsive reassurance-seeking appears to become normalized first, before its psychological effects are fully felt. In this sense, the NEET-UG controversy extends existing doomscrolling research by showing that prolonged academic uncertainty can produce behavioural patterns similar to those seen in wider public crises.

Manifestation 2: Public Crisis and Doomscrolling

RG Kar Medical College Incident (2024)

Background

The RG Kar Medical College incident moved quickly from a criminal investigation into a prolonged digital event marked by sustained public attention, competing narratives, and continuing uncertainty. As the case developed through official statements, judicial proceedings, media reports, and online discussion, digital platforms became the main channel through which people followed events as they unfolded. This study does not attempt to analyze the incident itself; instead, it examines how prolonged public uncertainty fed into doomscrolling behaviour.

Collective Uncertainty as Behavioural Trigger

Where the NEET-UG controversy involved uncertainty tied to individual academic futures, the RG Kar case shows that doomscrolling can also stem from collective emotional investment in a public crisis. Continued exposure to conflicting reports and shifting developments encouraged repeated information-seeking, even when new information did little to resolve the underlying uncertainty.

This extends [Kaya's \(2024\)](#) argument by suggesting that the uncertainty driving doomscrolling need not be personally relevant to the individual it can also arise from crises experienced collectively. He explains compulsive digital engagement in terms of individual vulnerability interacting with situational factors. Thus, the present case suggests that widespread public concern can, by itself, be enough to sustain repetitive information-seeking, independent of individual predisposition.

Digital Platforms and the Persistence of Public Uncertainty

Digital platforms kept engagement alive by continuously circulating official updates, media coverage, public commentary, and user-generated interpretation. Rather than settling the uncertainty, these interconnected sources of information prompted repeated verification and kept attention fixed on the unfolding event.

[Muhtar \(2025\)](#) attributes doomscrolling mainly to information overload, and [Liu \(2026\)](#) points to algorithmic amplification as the key driver. The RG Kar case suggests something further: that prolonged public discourse itself becomes part of the mechanism sustaining compulsive engagement. Here, institutional communication, media reporting, and online participation fed into one another, continually reproducing uncertainty and keeping users engaged.

Behavioural and Psychological Implications

The case shows how repeated engagement with an unfolding public crisis can gradually reinforce compulsive information-seeking. As uncertainty dragged on, disengagement became harder, even as substantially new information grew scarce

[Satici \(2022\)](#) and [Wang et al. \(2025\)](#) largely link doomscrolling to anxiety and diminished psychological well-being. The present case points to a different sequence: prolonged emotional investment in an unresolved public

event may first normalize compulsive engagement, with broader psychological consequences surfacing only later. The RG Kar incident thus suggests that the behavioural mechanisms underlying doomscrolling hold steady across different sources of uncertainty whether the trigger is a personal concern or a crisis experienced collectively.

Comparative Analysis

<i>DIMENSION</i>	<i>NEET UG PAPER LEAK</i>	<i>RG KAR MEDICAL COLLEGE INCIDENT</i>	<i>COMMON INSIGHT</i>
<i>NATURE OF UNCERTAINTY</i>	<i>Academic and institutional uncertainty</i>	<i>Public and societal uncertainty</i>	<i>Unresolved uncertainty drives repeated information seeking</i>
<i>PRIMARY MOTIVATION</i>	<i>Concern over examination outcomes and future prospects</i>	<i>Concern over justice, investigation and public safety</i>	<i>Continuous search for certainty</i>
<i>DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT</i>	<i>Repeated checking of official notices, media reports and social media.</i>	<i>Repeated monitoring of news, official updates, and public discussions</i>	<i>Cross platform verification becomes habitual</i>
<i>ROLE OF DIGITAL PLATFORM</i>	<i>Reinforced uncertainty through constant updates and interpretations</i>	<i>Sustained uncertainty through continuous media and public discourse.</i>	<i>Platforms prolonged rather than resolved uncertainty</i>
<i>BEHAVIOURAL OUTCOME</i>	<i>Compulsive reassurance seeking</i>	<i>Compulsive monitoring of an evolving public crisis.</i>	<i>Information seeking becomes repetitive and difficult to stop.</i>

Conclusion

Thus, together, the two cases show that doomscrolling in the Indian context isn't confined to global crises but emerges across diverse settings marked by prolonged uncertainty. Although the sources differ academic in NEET-UG, societal in RG Kar both reveal a similar behavioural pattern: uncertainty drives compulsive information-seeking, while digital platforms reinforce rather than resolve it. By examining these two contemporary Indian contexts, this study extends the largely Western scholarship on doomscrolling and shows that its underlying behavioural mechanisms remain consistent regardless of the source of uncertainty.

Tentative Chapterization

- *Chapter 1: Introduction*
- *Chapter 2 Literature Review and Literature Gap*
- *Chapter 3: Definition, Objective and Scope of the study*

- Chapter 4: Research Question
- Chapter 5: Research Methodology
- Chapter 6: Case Study

Conclusion

Digital technology didn't take long to reshape how people access and engage with information. Connectivity is obviously better than it used to be, but that's come with a cost- new behavioural patterns that researchers are only just starting to take seriously. Doomscrolling is one of them, and it says a lot about where information overload, uncertainty, and human behaviour collide in the digital age right now. The fact that it's becoming so common says something bigger about digital media's place in everyday life, and it raises real questions about how people actually engage with what they read online. Most people are online constantly at this point, so the real question isn't whether someone consumes information digitally it's what that constant consumption is doing to us. Doomscrolling isn't random. It's what happens when infinite scroll meets a brain wired to watch for threats every alert and breaking headline taps into an instinct built for real danger, except now that danger feels like it's everywhere, all the time. The mind doesn't know how to file it all away, so it just keeps scrolling, chasing a sense of resolution that never quite arrives.

That's the paradox. We scroll hoping to feel informed, maybe even in control like knowing more will make the uncertainty easier to carry. But the more we consume, the less settled we feel. It's not that people choose to feel anxious; it's that the format itself is built to keep us moving, never quite letting us land. So maybe the real question isn't why people doomscroll it's why we built an information ecosystem where it feels almost unavoidable.

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