

The Relationship between Doomscrolling and Emotion Regulation with Anxiety of Adolescent Social Media Users in MAN 2 Mojokerto

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to test the relationship between doomscrolling and emotion regulation and anxiety in adolescent social media users in MAN 2 Mojokerto. The phenomenon of doomscrolling, which is the habit of accessing negative information excessively, has become a concern in the context of adolescent mental health. Emotion regulation, as an individual's ability to manage emotional responses, is thought to have an important role in suppressing the negative impact of doomscrolling on anxiety. This study used a correlational quantitative approach, involving 237 3rd-grade students as participants. The instruments used included the doomscrolling scale, the emotion regulation scale (DERS), and the anxiety scale (RCMAS-2), all in Likert-scale format. The results of the data analysis showed a significant association between doomscrolling and emotion regulation and adolescent anxiety ($R = 0.807$; $p < 0.01$), with an explained variance of 65%. Partially, doomscrolling showed a significant positive association with anxiety ($t = 4.115$; $p < 0.05$), whereas emotion regulation showed a significant negative association ($t = -14.433$; $p < 0.05$). This suggests that the higher the intensity of doomscrolling, the higher the teen's anxiety levels; Conversely, the better the regulation of emotions, the lower the level of anxiety felt. These findings provide important implications for psychological interventions in helping adolescents manage healthy social media use and improve their ability to regulate emotions to reduce anxiety risk.

Keywords: Doomscrolling, Emotion Regulation, Anxiety, Teens, Social Media

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescents are in the developmental phase of transition from childhood to adulthood, characterized by various biological, cognitive, emotional, and social changes. Adolescence is also a period of self-discovery that greatly influences individuals, shaping their responses to the social environment, including technology and social media. In this digital era, social media has become an indispensable part of teenagers' daily lives. The We Are Social and Hootsuite (2023) report shows that 99% of Indonesian adolescents aged 13–17 years old have access to the internet and actively use social media. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter have become the primary spaces for teenagers to socialize,

find entertainment, and shape their identities. However, the high intensity of social media use also carries risks to mental health, especially when good self-management skills do not accompany its use.

One of the psychological disorders that many teenagers experience due to the use of social media is mental anxiety. According to Sarason and Sarason (1990), mental anxiety is a psychological condition characterized by internal tension, constant worry, and an individual's inability to control repetitive negative thoughts. Kaplan and Sadock (1997) define mental anxiety as an unpleasant emotional state accompanied by feelings of tension, worry, and irrational fear of something that is not necessarily happening. Stuart and Sundeen (2007) emphasize that mental anxiety is a subjective emotional experience that arises as a result of internal conflict or unresolved psychological distress. Meanwhile, Nevid (2013) explained that mental anxiety often occurs due to an imbalance between expectations and reality and the weak ability of individuals to manage emotions healthily. This phenomenon leads to various symptoms, such as difficulty sleeping, overthinking, low self-confidence, and excessive fear of others' judgment.

Through the above explanation, 3rd-grade MAN (Madrasah Aliyah Negeri) teenagers are an important group to pay attention to. They are at a critical stage of development, where the main focus is on the future, be it further study preparation, final exams, or career plans. Academic pressure and social expectations are additional triggers for stress in this phase.

Ideally, adolescents at this stage are more focused on long-term life planning. However, in reality, many of them still use gadgets with high intensity, especially to access social media. Academic needs do not entirely drive this dependence; emotional, social, and habit factors have also been formed. This reflects a contradiction between the need to focus on the future and behaviors that are often distracting and emotional.

One form of digital behavior that is relevant in this context is doomscrolling. The term doomscrolling refers to the habit of constantly scrolling through negative news or information, especially through social media and other digital platforms. McLaughlin (2020) calls doomscrolling a compulsive behavior that is triggered by the desire to stay informed, but instead causes negative emotional impacts such as stress, anxiety, and mental fatigue. In adolescents, this habit is exacerbated by high curiosity, difficulty managing their time spent on digital devices, and a lack of awareness of the psychological effects of the content they consume.

Research shows that doomscrolling has a positive correlation with psychological distress, as found by (Hansya and Ardi, 2021), and can even cause symptoms of anxiety disorders, as described by (Shabahang et al., 2022) and (Dhanani and Franz, 2021). This habit took hold during the pandemic and persisted afterward, as (Zhao and Zhou, 2023) found.

Nonetheless, not all teens involved in doomscrolling experience anxiety to the same degree. One important differentiating factor is the ability to regulate emotions. Emotion regulation is an individual's ability to recognize, understand, and adaptively manage emotions. Individuals with good emotional regulation tend to assess information

rationally and are not easily influenced by negative content. On the other hand, adolescents who have difficulty in emotional regulation tend to use social media impulsively and compulsively, thus increasing the risk of anxiety disorders. Gross (1998) defines the regulation of emotions as the process that affects what emotions we experience, when we experience them, and how we express them. Emotion regulation strategies can be adaptive, such as reappraisal (reassessing the situation positively), or maladaptive, such as suppression (suppressing emotions without completing them).

The dynamics between emotion regulation and anxiety suggest that individuals with good emotion regulation tend to manage fear or worry constructively. They can assess information more objectively, limit exposure to negative content, and engage in activities that can calm their emotions. In contrast, adolescents who lack strong emotion regulation skills tend to respond negatively to negative information. Research by McLaughlin et al. (2011) shows that adolescents who experience difficulties in emotional regulation are more susceptible to anxiety disorders and depression, especially when faced with situations that cause stress or emotional distress. Schwartz and Koenig (1996) revealed that adolescents who do not have adaptive emotion regulation strategies often use ineffective coping mechanisms, such as avoiding problems or suppressing emotions, which ultimately exacerbate perceived anxiety levels. Compas et al. (2017) stated that poor emotion regulation in adolescents is associated with an increase in symptoms of internalizing disorders, including anxiety and stress. Research by Sloan et al. (2017) shows that difficulties in emotion regulation are positively correlated with high levels of anxiety in adolescents. Hallion et al. (2019) stated that emotion regulation is an important predictor in determining a person's susceptibility to anxiety disorders. Thus, the inability to manage emotions effectively makes adolescents more vulnerable to the negative impacts of exposure to emotionally disturbing information, especially in today's digital era.

Although studies on doomscrolling and anxiety have begun to be widely conducted, most of the research still focuses on the adult context or pandemic situation. For example, studies by (Dhanani and Franz, 2021) and (Shabahang et al., 2022) highlight the link between doomscrolling and increased anxiety and psychological distress in the adult population during the pandemic. Despite numerous studies, research specifically examining doomscrolling behavior in adolescents in the context of post-pandemic daily life is still very limited. In addition, doomscrolling is generally studied in conjunction with stress and depression (Hansya & Ardi, 2021; Zhao & Zhou, 2023), while its direct association with the mental anxiety of adolescents who actively use social media has not received much attention.

On the other hand, emotion regulation has been extensively researched in relation to various psychological problems such as depression, stress, and interpersonal conflict (Gross, 1998). Still, most of these studies do not directly link it to social media use or doomscrolling. Studies such as (McLaughlin et al., 2011), (Hallion et al., 2019), and (Sloan et al., 2017) did show that difficulties in emotion regulation contribute to anxiety. Still, they did not examine it alongside digital behaviors such as doomscrolling in a single research model.

Therefore, there is still an important gap in the literature, namely, the lack of studies examining how doomscrolling and emotion regulation simultaneously affect adolescent mental anxiety. In fact, these two variables have the potential to have a complementary influence on mental health, especially in the context of intense social media use in adolescents. This research aims to fill this gap by providing a more comprehensive understanding of the contribution of these two variables to adolescent mental anxiety in the digital era.

Thus, researchers are interested in conducting research on doomscrolling, emotion regulation, and anxiety among adolescents. In the midst of a fast-paced, information-filled digital era, teenagers need to be equipped with strong emotional regulation skills to manage the negative impacts of social media, including doomscrolling. An in-depth understanding of the relationship between these three variables is important for his research.

METHOD

Research Population

The population of this study comprises 3rd-grade students at MAN 2 Mojokerto. The choice of grade 3 as the subject of the study is because the students in the class are in the final stages of upper secondary education, a period that often involves greater academic pressure and significant emotional transitions. Additionally, they spend more time on social media, even as they prepare for their final exams and face a major challenge in navigating their future. Therefore, the population in this study is 237 subjects.

Research Participation

In this study, the population was defined as all grade 3 students at MAN 2 Mojokerto in the 2024/2025 school year. Based on preliminary data obtained from the school, the number of grade 3 students was recorded at approximately 250.

However, during data collection, the researcher distributed instruments at the time of the grade 3 students' separation, as carried out by the school. Because this activity is not mandatory and depends on each student's attendance, not all 3rd-grade students attend. Some students choose not to come for various personal reasons. Therefore, the number of respondents who were successfully reached and willing to complete the research instrument was 237 students.

Based on these conditions, the sampling technique used in this study is saturated sampling. This technique is used when all members of the available population are used as research samples (Sugiyono, 2020). In other words, all 3rd-grade MAN 2 Mojokerto students who attended the farewell activity and met the inclusion criteria were used as research subjects. This technique is considered appropriate given the relatively small population, and the whole population can be reached directly at the time of data collection. The inclusion criteria set in this study are as follows:

1. Active students in grade 3 of MAN 2 Mojokerto.
2. Have an active social media account.

3. Willing to be a respondent and fill in research instruments voluntarily.

By using saturated sampling techniques, this study is expected to obtain a complete and representative picture of the relationship among doomscrolling, emotion regulation, and anxiety in 3rd-grade students at MAN 2 Mojokerto.

Research Design

This study uses a correlational quantitative design to determine the extent to which one variable is related to another. This study aims to determine the relationship between Doomscrolling and Emotion Regulation as an independent variable and Anxiety as a dependent variable.

Assumption Test and Data Analysis

Normality Test

The normality test is carried out to analyze data and determine whether it is normally distributed. The normality test aims to determine the distribution of data in the variables to be used in the study. The normality test used is the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, performed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 21 for Windows. The data is declared to be normally distributed if $p > 0.05$; on the other hand, if $p < 0.05$, the data is abnormally distributed.

Table 1. Distribution Normality Test

Variabel	One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test		
	Df	Sig.	Information
Anxiety	237	0.230	Usual

The results of the normality test for the anxiety variable using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test showed a p-value of 0.230 ($p > 0.05$). This means that the data are normally distributed.

Linearity Test

The linear test aims to determine whether the analyzed data is linear. Linear tests assess whether the variables studied have a linear relationship. Linear test to see how variable X is related to variable Y. Linear test using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 21 for Windows. Data with a p-value > 0.05 ($p > 0.05$) has a linear relationship; on the other hand, if $p < 0.05$, the data is not linear.

Table 2. Results of the Linearity Test of Doomscrolling with Anxiety

Variabel	F	Sig.	Information
Doomscrolling -Anxiety	1.067	0.385	Linear

The results of the linearity test for the relationship between doomscrolling and anxiety were not significant ($p > 0.05$). This indicates a significant linear relationship between the doomscrolling variable and anxiety.

Table 3. Results of the Emotion Regulation with Anxiety Linearity Test

Variabel	F	Sig.	Information
Emotion regulation -Anxiety	0.997	0.486	Linear

The results of the linearity test for the relationship between doomscrolling and anxiety were not significant ($p > 0.05$). This indicates a significant linear relationship between the doomscrolling variable and anxiety.

Multicollinearity Test

The multicollinearity test is one of the requirements of the classical assumption test using multiple linear regression analysis. The purpose of the multicollinearity test is to assess whether there is intercorrelation (a strong relationship) among the independent variables (X). A good regression model should not correlate with independent variables (X); otherwise, multicollinearity may occur.

Table 4. Multicollinearity Test Results

Variabel	Collinearity Statistics		
	Tolerance	BRIGHT	Information
Doomscrolling – Emotion regulation	0.671	1.491	Not Happening Multikolinearitas

The results of the multicollinearity test between the variables X1 (Doomscrolling) and X2 (Emotion regulation) showed a tolerance of $0.671 > 0.10$ and a VIF of $1.491 < 10.00$. This means that there is no multicollinearity or intercorrelation between the variables X1 (Doomscrolling) and X2 (Emotion regulation).

Heterokedesticity Test

The heteroskedasticity test is one of the requirements of the classical assumption test using multiple linear regression analysis. The purpose of using the heteroskedasticity test is to assess whether there are inconsistencies between the regression model's variation and the residual values. A good regression model should not have heteroscedasticity.

Table 5. Heterokedasticity Test Results

Variabel	p-value	Information	Conclusion
Doomscrolling	0.800	>0.05	Not Happening Heterokedastisitas
Emotion regulation	0.613	>0.05	Not Happening Heterokedastisitas

Results of the heterokedasticity test on the variables X1 (Doomscrolling) and X2 (Emotion regulation), using Spearman's Rho correlation, showed significance = 0.800 ($p > 0.05$) for the Doomscrolling variable and significance = 0.613 ($p > 0.05$) for the emotion regulation variable. This means there is no heteroskedasticity in either variable.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

RESEARCH RESULT

Data collection for this research was conducted over 3 days, from the first day of questionnaire distribution on April 10, 2025, to April 12, 2025. The research was carried out by distributing questionnaires directly to schools through questionnaire sheets. Based on the research needs, the researcher obtained 237 subjects who met the sample size requirement. The data analysis in this study employs a double regression analysis, using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 26 for Windows. Here are the results of the hypothesis analysis:

The results of the first Hypothesis Test (H1) were a test of the relationship between doomscrolling variables and emotion regulation with anxiety in adolescent social media users at MAN 2 Mojokerto. Based on the results of simultaneous calculations using multiple regression analysis, an R score of 0.807 was obtained with a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.01$). This means that there is a significant relationship between doomscrolling (X1) and emotion regulation (X2) and anxiety (Y), so the third hypothesis is accepted. The effective contribution in this study was 0.649. This means that doomscrolling and emotion regulation have a 65% effect on anxiety.

Table 6. Results of Simultaneous Regression Analysis Test

Model	R	R Square	Itself.	Information
1	.807	.652	0.000	Signifikan

The results of the second hypothesis test (H2) examine the relationship between doomscrolling variables and anxiety among adolescent social media users at MAN 2 Mojokerto. Based on the results of the partial correlation test of the relationship between doomscrolling and anxiety, a t-statistic of 4.115 was obtained with a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This means that there is a significant link between doomscrolling and anxiety. So it can be concluded that the first hypothesis, namely that there is a positive relationship between doomscrolling and anxiety, is accepted.

Table 7. Partial Analysis Test Results

Model	Score t	Itself.	Information
Doomscrolling	4.115	0.000	Signifikan

The results of the hypothesis test three (H3) were a test of the relationship between the variables of emotion regulation and anxiety in adolescents who used social media at MAN 2 Mojokerto. Based on the results of the partial analysis of the relationship between emotion regulation and anxiety, a t-value of -14.433 was obtained with a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This means that there is a significant relationship between emotion regulation and anxiety. Therefore, it can be concluded that the second hypothesis, namely that there is a negative relationship between emotion regulation and perceived anxiety, is supported.

Table 8. Partial Analysis Test Results

Model	Score t	Itself.	Information
Emotion regulation	-14.433	0.000	Signifikan

DISCUSSION

Anxiety is a complex emotional condition and often interferes with an individual's psychological functioning, especially in the adolescent age group. This anxiety can be triggered by a variety of factors, including social pressure, future uncertainty, and repeated exposure to negative information through social media. In today's digital context, one of the behaviors that emerges and contributes to high anxiety is doomscrolling, which is the tendency to constantly access news or information that is negative in nature, even if it causes feelings of emotional discomfort.

This study aimed to identify the relationship between doomscrolling and emotion regulation and anxiety in adolescent social media users. The main focus of this study is 3rd-grade adolescents at MAN 2 Mojokerto, who are, in reality, in a vulnerable phase of psychological development and intensively use social media as a medium for communication and information-seeking.

Based on the results of the first hypothesis test (H1), there is a positive relationship between doomscrolling and anxiety among adolescent social media users at MAN 2 Mojokerto. This means that the high and low levels of doomscrolling affect the anxiety of adolescent social media users in MAN 2 Mojokerto. It can be concluded that the first hypothesis, which posits a positive relationship between doomscrolling and anxiety, is accepted. This is in line with a study conducted by Shabahang et al. in 2024 entitled "Doomscrolling Evokes Existential Anxiety and Fosters Pessimism about Human Nature: Evidence from Iran and the United States," which contains the relationship between doomscrolling behavior and existential anxiety and a pessimistic view of human nature, suggesting that doomscrolling significantly predicts an increase in existential anxiety in both groups. The results of his research show that excessive consumption of negative news can

disrupt an individual's basic beliefs about a just world and a good human being, thereby triggering existential anxiety and a negative view of humanity.

Excessive consumption of negative information leads individuals to question justice and goodness in this world, causing deep insecurity, fear, and worry. McLaughlin (2020) also mentioned that doomscrolling is a form of compulsive behavior that appears as an attempt to seek a sense of security through information, but actually exacerbates stress and anxiety because it strengthens exposure to negative content.

In terms of stress and cognitive theory, Beck & Emery (1985) explain that anxiety arises from cognitive distortion, which is a negative mindset that exaggerates danger. Doomscrolling reinforces this distortion because social media algorithms repeatedly surface negative information to sustain emotional engagement. In this case, adolescents who do doomscroll constantly experience excessive threat perception and lose control of the information consumed, so their emotional response in the form of anxiety becomes stronger. Thus, the results of this hypothesis illustrate that doomscrolling not only has a passive impact but is also an active factor that worsens adolescents' psychological states, particularly in creating persistent and uncontrollable anxiety.

This study also shows that the results of the analysis of the second hypothesis test (H2) indicate that emotion regulation has a significant negative relationship with anxiety in adolescent social media users in MAN 2 Mojokerto. This means that high and low emotion regulation is the opposite of high and low anxiety. So if the regulation of emotions is high, then the anxiety is small, and vice versa. This is in line with a study conducted by Catur Wulan Sari in 2020, titled "The Relationship between Emotion Regulation and Sports Anxiety in Judo Athletes," which examines the influence of emotion regulation on the anxiety experienced by judo athletes during matches. The results of his research showed that there was a significant negative relationship between emotion regulation and exercise anxiety.

In the context of teenagers, especially active social media users, pressure comes not only from the real world but also from digital social expectations, such as self-comparisons, negative comments, or exposure to sensitive content. Adolescents with good emotional regulation are better able to filter the information they consume, are less easily affected by emotional dynamics on social media, and can calm down when anxiety or fear arises.

According to Gratz & Roemer (2004), emotion regulation includes the ability to accept negative emotions without judgment, control impulsive behavior when emotions increase, and have effective strategies to relieve stress. When these aspects develop well, the individual can maintain their psychological functioning despite situations that trigger emotional distress. Thus, this dynamic shows that emotion regulation serves as an internal buffer against the onslaught of information and social pressure present in digital media. When teenagers can manage their emotions healthily, they are not only able to avoid increased anxiety but also maintain their psychological balance when dealing with a variety of challenging situations, both in the real world and online.

The results of the analysis of the hypothesis test three (H3) also showed that the combination of doomscrolling and emotion regulation affected anxiety in adolescent social media users in MAN 2 Mojokerto. The combination of high doomscrolling behavior and low emotion regulation ability has been shown to increase the likelihood of anxiety emerging. In its psychological dynamics, doomscrolling acts as an external trigger in the form of constant exposure to negative information that causes emotional distress, while the regulation of emotions acts as an internal mechanism that determines how individuals respond to such stress. If the regulation of emotions is low, then the individual is unable to suppress impulses, calm down, or change the perspective of negative information, so that anxiety will develop more easily. However, if emotion regulation is high, the adverse effects of doomscrolling can be minimized.

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), in the transactional theory of stress, emotional stress is not only determined by the occurrence, in this case, doomscrolling, but also by the individual's judgment and control abilities that reflect the function of emotion regulation. This shows that emotion regulation serves a moderating function in the impact of doomscrolling. Meanwhile, Gross (2002) emphasized that individuals who can manage their emotions using adaptive strategies such as cognitive reappraisal will be more resistant to external emotional pressure, including that from social media. Thus, the combination of these two variables provides a thorough explanation that adolescent anxiety is not only triggered by social media itself, but also highly dependent on an individual's internal capacity to manage his or her emotional responses. Therefore, interventions to address adolescent anxiety need to be done in two directions: reducing exposure to negative content and at the same time strengthening emotion regulation skills.

An R-Square value of 0.652 indicates that doomscrolling and emotion regulation together explain 65% of anxiety variance in adolescents. The remaining 35% were influenced by other variables outside the model, such as family, academic, social, or biological factors. This research confirms that in the digital age, doomscrolling is a form of maladaptive behavior that contributes significantly to adolescent anxiety. However, good emotion regulation skills can be an important protector. Therefore, interventions aimed at reducing doomscrolling and strengthening emotion regulation skills are essential to improve adolescent mental health.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed a significant relationship between doomscrolling, emotion regulation, and anxiety in adolescent social media users, especially 3rd-grade students of MAN 2 Mojokerto, who totaled 237 participants. The method used in this study is quantitative correlation. The results showed that doomscrolling had a significant positive relationship with anxiety, meaning that the higher the intensity of adolescents accessing negative information continuously through social media, the higher the level of anxiety they experienced. Teenagers who are constantly exposed to bad news tend to experience emotional distress, overthinking, and losing their sense of security in the world around them.

In addition, emotion regulation shows a significant negative relationship with anxiety, where the better the adolescent's ability to recognize, understand, and manage their emotions, the lower the level of anxiety felt. Adolescents with adaptive emotion regulation can resist the urge to engage in compulsive doomscrolling and maintain their emotional stability, even when faced with social pressure and negative information on digital media. The study also found that doomscrolling and emotion regulation simultaneously exerted a significant influence on adolescent anxiety, with an R-squared value of 65%, meaning that these two variables could explain more than two-thirds of anxiety variability.

These results show that doomscrolling plays a role as a digital stress trigger that worsens adolescents' psychological conditions, while emotion regulation is a protective factor that can dampen its impact. In this context, adolescents, as a generation growing up in a digital environment, need to be equipped with strong emotional literacy to navigate the uncontrolled flow of information. Therefore, schools, families, and education policymakers need to actively develop intervention programs that not only suppress doomscrolling habits but also increase adolescents' capacity for emotional regulation. This effort is important for creating a young generation that is not only digitally literate but also mentally healthy and resilient in the face of the pressures of the times.

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