



Boredom, Doomscrolling, and the rise of Short Video Dependence among Young Adults and Adolescents

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Abstract: When you think of the word doom, it has an evocative emotional response. Doomscrolling is best defined as consuming harmful social media content or consuming it in an unhealthy manner. Doomscrolling is the habit of consuming negative news online repeatedly until it starts to significantly impact our emotional well - being. It helps us to escape our emotions or feelings, so a lot of us find ourselves endlessly scrolling when experiencing uncomfortable emotions and sensations, such as tiredness and anxiety. Boredom is the aversive experience of wanting, but being unable, to engage in satisfying activity. Boredom is a complex emotion characterized by feelings of indifference, emptiness, helplessness and dissatisfaction that arise when an individual faces a lack of external and internal stimulation and is unable to experience adequate satisfaction of needs. Boredom can lead to school absenteeism, provoke deviant behaviors, eating disorders and pathological disorders. The data collected included 60 samples of young adults and adolescents. The results found out that there is no relationship between doomscrolling and boredom proneness. Doomscrolling is often habitual and emotionally driven, so strategies should target both behavioural patterns and emotional triggers.

Keywords: *Short Video Consumption, Unhealthy Coping Strategy, Among Young Adults/ Adolescents.*

1. Introduction

Doomscrolling

Doomscrolling refers to “a state of media use typically characterized as individuals persistently scrolling through their social media newsfeeds with an obsessive focus on distressing, depressing or otherwise negative information” (Slaughter, 2020). Doomscrolling refers to the compulsive habit of consuming large amounts of negative or alarming content online. This could include news stories about disasters, political conflict, economic uncertainty, or social injustices. Even if the information is overwhelming or emotionally draining, individuals feel unable to stop scrolling. Doomscrolling resembles online vigilance, problematic internet/social media use, and fear of missing out, with moderate to high associations. Doomscrolling is the act of continuously scrolling through negative news or distressing content online, often for long periods, even though it causes anxiety, sadness, or emotional exhaustion. It’s become increasingly common in the digital age, especially during times of crisis, understanding the psychological forces behind it can help us break the cycle.

Boredom Proneness

Boredom represents “a negative experience commonly arising in situations deemed deficient in meaning, interest, and challenge, and is thought to motivate us to remediate these deficiencies by modifying behaviors or situations” (Sansone et al., 1992). Boredom is a universal compound emotional experience in which individuals cannot experience sufficient satisfaction of needs when faced with poor external stimuli and internal stimuli, and feel apathy, unhappiness etc. which has stimulated the individual’s subsequent behavioral performance. Boredom is closely related to an individual’s health, education, career and social problems. Boredom can cause adolescents to skip school, induce deviant behaviors and addictive behaviors such as drug abuse, eating disorders, and pathological gambling, and often have occupational problems such as burnout, low job satisfaction, and low work efficiency, and are accompanied by a variety of negative emotional experiences, such as anxiety, loneliness, depression, etc.

2. Review of Literature

A study conducted by Mu et al. (2022) explores the issue of short- form video (SFV) addiction, particularly among young people, due to their limited self-control. The study investigated how stress factors such as school burnout, social anxiety, and family dynamics can

lead to short form video addiction. The researchers also examined the negative effects of short video addiction on happiness, relationships, and persistence. The study involved 242 adolescents in China who consumed short videos. The findings from the study suggest that stress contributes to short form video addiction, which in turn, negatively impacts well-being. This research offers insights into the causes and consequences of short form video addiction, contributing to the understanding of stress and addiction in the context of social media. Wolfers and Utz (2022) studied social media use, stress and coping. The research states that social media can cause stress, serve as resources and can be used as a tool for various coping strategies.

Huang, Hu and Chen (2021) explored stress and problematic use of short-form video applications (SVA) among middle aged Chinese adults. The popularity of short form video applications such as tik Tok, among middle-aged group Chinese adults have raised concerns about problematic SVAs use. The study aimed to examine the relationship between stress and problematic SVAs use via meditating roles of duration of use and flow experience. A total of 194 middle-aged adults from across the nation participated in an online survey. The results found that stress was positively associated with problematic SVAs use. The results also found that duration of use positively mediated the relationship between stress and problematic SVAs use.

Lemola et al. (2014) studied electronic media use at night, sleep disturbance and depressive symptoms among adolescents. Excessive electronic media use at night is a risk factor for both adolescents' sleep disturbance and depression. Sleep disturbance mediated the relationship between electronic media use at night, and sleep associated with smartphone ownership. Further, participants reported on their electronic media use in bed before sleep such as frequency of watching T.V. or spending time online. Electronic media use was negatively related with sleep duration and positively with sleep difficulties, which in turn were related to depressive symptoms. Sleep difficulties were the more important mediator than sleep duration. The results of the study suggest that adolescents might benefit from education regarding sleep hygiene and the risks of electronic media use at night.

A study was conducted on 532 Chinese college students. The researchers studied the relationship between social exclusion and short video addiction among college students and the mediating roles of boredom and self-control. The results showed that social exclusion has a positive predictive effect on college students' short video addiction. The impact of social exclusion on college students' short video addiction was mediated by boredom and self-control, and the

chained mediation of boredom and self-control. The results suggested that institutes should reduce peer rejection and improve student's mental health literacy to reduce boredom and enhance self-control, thus effectively preventing short video addiction (Zhang et al., 2024).

A study was conducted on undergraduate college students. The authors studied the relationship between short-form video addiction and academic procrastination. The authors explored the role of executive functions (i.e., attentional control) and personality traits (i.e., boredom proneness) in the association. Results revealed that the short-form video addiction not only directly impacted academic procrastination but also placed an indirect effect on academic procrastination through attention control. Furthermore, the mediating effect of attentional control was contingent upon an individual's boredom proneness. Higher levels of boredom proneness weakened the impact of short-form video addiction on attentional control. The findings expand our knowledge of the negative effects of short-form video addiction and underlying mechanisms, providing implications for mitigating undergraduates' academic procrastination (Xie et al., 2023).

3. Methodology

3.1 Purpose

The purpose is to study short video consumption as an unhealthy coping strategy among young adults and adolescents.

3.2 Hypothesis

There will be a significant positive relationship between Doomscrolling Boredom Proneness.

3.3 Sample

A total sample of 30 young adults and 30 adolescents between the ages 12-25 was collected from Chandigarh, India.

3.4 Measures

Doomscrolling Questionnaire (DQ-12): The scale was developed by Sharma et al. (2022). It was used to measure emotional impact (anxiety, sadness and stress) and addictive compulsive features (similar to social media use). The scale consists of 12 items. The responses are recorded on a (4-point Likert scale ranging from Never to Always).

Short Boredom Proneness Scale - Short Form (SBPS): The scale was developed by Struk et al. (2015). It was used to measure tendency towards boredom in everyday life and attention difficulties. The scale consists of 8 items. The responses are recorded on a (5-point Likert scale ranging from Extremely uncharacteristic of me to Extremely characteristic of me).

3.5 Procedures

The participants were informed about the purpose of the research, and the questionnaires were filled through google forms. Standardized tests were administered to the participants. Each participant was thanked for the cooperation and kind help.

4. Analysis of Data

Results

Table 1: N, Mean and Standard Deviation

	Doomscrolling	Boredom Proneness
N	60	60
Mean	9.85	18.1
Standard deviation	8.18	7.14

Table 2: Correlation between variables

	Doomscrolling	Short Boredom Proneness Scale
Doomscrolling	—	
Boredom Proneness	0.171	—

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

5. Discussion of Results

The results found out that there is no significant relationship between doomscrolling and boredom proneness ($r=0.17$), however the result was positive.

According to Lupien et al. (2018) a study was conducted on Indian college students. The researchers studied the relationship between doomscrolling and psychological fatigue. The results found out that there is a positive correlation between doomscrolling increases and psychological fatigue. Sharma et al. (2022) conducted a study on 392 participants. The aim of the study was to explore the cause and effect design to investigate the impact of doomscrolling on these behavioural

and psychological outcomes. The study showed that doomscrolling negatively affects mental health, guiding interventions, social media policies, and digital wellness strategies.

According to Zhang et al. (2023) a study was conducted on Chinese college students. The main aim of the study was to investigate the mediating roles of boredom proneness and self-control in the relationship between anxiety and smartphone addiction. Standardized psychological scales to measure anxiety, boredom proneness, self-control and smartphone addiction were administered. The results showed that the anxiety is positively associated with smartphone addiction, boredom proneness and self-control are important mediators in this relationship. Strengthening self-control and mitigating boredom could prevent smartphone addiction in anxious college students.

Vogel and Fenske (2024) conducted a study on boredom proneness and elevated rates of problematic substance abuse, gambling, and smartphone use has difficulties with emotion regulation that can lead to maladaptive attempts to cope with negative affect. Results indicated that difficulties in emotion regulation predicted boredom proneness and mediated attentional difficulties and lower levels of cognitive flexibility, but not memory failures. Our results highlight the importance of specific cognitive-affective mechanisms of emotion regulation to better boredom proneness and its long-term consequences.

6. Conclusion

Doomscrolling, is a compulsive habit of consuming negative or distressing news for prolonged periods. The phenomenon transcends barriers of age , gender, caste, class, religion and nationality, impacting people from all walks of life. Whether consuming consciously or unconsciously, doomscrolling has become a part of modern digital habits and is noticeable in daily life. Doomscrolling, the compulsive consumption of short video consumption, has emerged as a significant challenge in young adults and adolescents. The psychological and emotional impacts of doomscrolling, particularly its association with overall short-video consumption. It explores the behavioural and cognitive mechanisms underlying doomscrolling , including increased anxiety and stress, depression or hopelessness and reduced concentration and productivity. The importance of addressing doomscrolling to improve individual well- being and promote healthier digital habits in a hyperconnected world. An unpleasant, transient affective state in which the individual feels a pervasive lack of interest and difficulty concentrating on the current activity.

Boredom was an unpleasant emotion that typically occurs in unengaging, meaningless, and under challenging situations. The momentary experience of boredom occurs frequently, and it can promote both undesirable and desirable. Boredom proneness was associated with various problematic behaviors and mental health issues. Boredom proneness was a trait, like construct suffers from conceptual ambiguity and measurement issues.

Boredom proneness represents individual differences in (a) the frequency of getting bored, (b) the intensity of boredom and/or (c) a holistic perception of life being boring (perceived life boredom). Boredom proneness and low intrinsic motivation among young adults and adolescents. Boredom proneness had acknowledged the relationship with psychological and physical health symptoms, negative effects and problems in work and academic settings. Boredom has short-term and long-term consequences.

The short-term consequences include, sleeping disorders, daydreaming, reckless driving, smoking, drinking alcohol, and overreacting as ways to cope with boredom; while the long - term consequences include stress, loss of concentration, making mistakes, and thinking of leaving the job. Doomscrolling was often habitual and emotionally driven, so strategies should target both behavioral patterns and emotional triggers.

It is suggested that individuals should,

- a) Schedule regular periods of digital detoxification to reduce exposure to negative online content.
- b) Incorporate mindfulness or meditation practices to enhance awareness of doomscrolling behaviors.
- c) Implement daily time limits for social media and news engagement.
- d) Participate in offline activities or hobbies that foster creativity and relaxation.
- e) Utilize applications or browser extensions designed to filter or block distressing content.
- f) Seek support from friends or family members when experiencing anxiety or feeling overwhelmed by online information.
- g) Priorities self-care routines and strive for a balanced lifestyle to support emotional well-being.

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