Always Online, Always Tired: A Quantitative Study on Doomscrolling and College Students' Well-Being at Bulacan State University

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100300406

Received: 18 March 2026; Accepted: 24 March 2026; Published: 11 April 2026

ABSTRACT

In this technological era, social media has become an indispensable segment of Generation Z students' day-to-day activities. With the rapid development of smartphones and the internet, social media is no longer just a source of entertainment; it has become a new way for individuals to connect, learn, and stay updated. This study focuses on the prevalence of doomscrolling and its relationship to the overall well-being of college students at Bulacan State University. The researchers of this paper intended to determine how doomscrolling influences the overall well-being of college students. The researchers surveyed 70 students, with informed consent, across several colleges, assessing doomscrolling habits and physical, mental, emotional, and academic health, which reveals significant findings: 78% of the respondents are heavy internet users spending at least 5 hours or more online daily. Findings further revealed a very high level of distress across physical health with a weighted mean of 4.35, mental health with a weighted mean of 4.29, emotional health with a weighted mean of 4.29, and academic well-being with a weighted mean of 4.33, suggesting sleep disruption, mental exhaustion, reduced focus, and decreased productivity. Correlational analysis revealed a positive moderate relationship between doomscrolling and overall well-being distress ($r = 0.536$). This indicates that doomscrolling is related to a greater negative impact on students' comprehensive health. To cope and manage its effects, students commonly reported using strict app timers or limits, a no-phone zone, and leaving devices in a different room while sleeping or studying. Overall, the study highlights doomscrolling as a digital behaviour that significantly affects the overall well-being of the students and emphasizes the importance of self-regulation, awareness, and a wellness approach to promote healthier online habits.

Keywords: Doomscrolling, college students, student well-being, digital media use, Bulacan State University

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital era, social media has become an indispensable segment of Generation Z students' daily activities. According to Lee (2023), social media was no longer just a source of entertainment but also a medium that allows users to acquire information and stay connected socially. However, excessive social media use can develop negative behaviours, one of which is doomscrolling.

According to Nguyen (2020), the term doomscrolling was first referred to in early 2020 to denote a digital media habit that appeared during the COVID-19 pandemic and became widely common. Unlike other forms of social media use that are considered passive, doomscrolling is completely immersive, and the user may find themselves engaged in online browsing for a lengthy period without being aware of it and unable to focus on other things. Moreover, since online platforms are informed of what captivates most people by using algorithmic systems, they serve them with content that will draw their attention, given their previous internet history. According to Yang et al. (2024), students are more likely to be affected by this phenomenon as they not only use social media frequently but are also deeply curious about social and global issues.

Diving deeper into the conversation, doomscrolling is a relatively new topic in mental health research that has garnered a lot of interest lately (Satici et al., 2022). It is considered the habitual or excessive amount of surfing online or through social media platforms, watching short video content, reels, posts, and other user-generated

content. While surfing through the internet or social media to pass the time is not bad, an excessive amount of it can be harmful and may develop a form of internet addiction disorder.

In the framework of Social Media Addiction Theory by Griffith (2005), it is assumed that behavioural addictions develop through activities that provide immediate and easily accessible emotional satisfaction. As they achieve this satisfaction, over time, it becomes a dominant activity in an individual's daily life, leading to increased tolerance, where they spend more time scrolling to achieve their new satisfaction level, ultimately leading to conflict between academic and personal duties.

Moreover, a study shows that students who suffer from doomscrolling were found to be strongly positively correlated with symptoms such as anxiety, emotional weariness, and poor sleep. These impact their overall well-being due to their poor time management and compulsive behaviour. Hence, immediate action and digital management strategies are vital to achieve healthy overall well-being and online habits before this prevalent doomscrolling does more damage to students. Developing media literacy initiatives, offering mental health services, and encouraging responsible digital behavior on college campuses is a must to put a step forward in the right direction (Usman et al., 2025).

The researchers aim to examine the prevalence of doomscrolling among college students at Bulacan State University and quantitatively evaluate its relationship with their overall well-being. Although global studies have confirmed the connection between compulsive news consumption and increased psychological distress (Sharma et al., 2022; Satici et al.,2023), there remains insufficient empirical evidence evaluating how this digital behaviour affects the local student population. This study aims to address that gap by determining the correlation between overexposure to negative online content and indicators of student burnout, anxiety, and academic functioning. By examining these variables, the results will provide an analytical basis for understanding the "always online" fatigue that continues within the university's community.

Objectives of the Study:

- To be able to identify and measure the frequency of doomscrolling habits among college students.
- To be able to assess the level of overall well-being of the college students across the domains of physical health, emotional health, mental health, and academic well-being.
- To be able to determine if a significant relationship exists between the frequency of doomscrolling and the level of overall well-being of the college students.
- To be able to identify and recommend effective coping mechanisms and digital management strategies to mitigate and prevent doomscrolling.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In accordance with Barooah (2025), "descriptive correlational research design was used to identify relationships between variables without manipulating them."

The researchers of this study have chosen descriptive-correlational research as their research design, as it examines the relationship between variables without manipulating them. Considering that the objective of the study is to assess and determine the effect of doomscrolling on the overall well-being of the students, using descriptive-correlational research would be the most appropriate. Lastly, this study aims to determine if a significant relationship exists between doomscrolling habits and the overall well-being of students, examining physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The researchers of this study decided that the target population would be the undergraduate college students of Bulacan State University - Main Campus. A total of 70 students covered the target population. While according to Bujang (2024) a minimum of 30 individuals is generally recommended for correlational research to achieve

statistical treatability, the researchers opted for a larger sample to enhance reliability and ensure a more diverse representation of academic workload. Regarding the demographics of the respondents, the researchers decided to categorize the respondents according to their respective colleges.

The researchers used a stratified systematic-purposive sampling in choosing respondents for this study. The 14 colleges were arranged in alphabetical order and a systematic selection was applied by choosing the even-numbered colleges resulting in a total of seven (7) representative strata: College of Arts and Letters, College of Criminal Justice Education, College of Information and Communications Technology, College of Law, College of Engineering, College of Science, and College of Social Sciences and Philosophy. To ensure an equal distribution of data, a purposive quota of ten (10) respondents was gathered from each of the selected colleges.

Research Instrument

The researchers constructed a survey questionnaire as the study's instrument, adapted and developed, to measure student well-being and doomscrolling habits. The survey questionnaire was composed of multiple-choice items, a 5-point Likert scale, and a checklist-type item to enhance efficiency and clarity of the survey instrument. To guarantee the credibility of the survey questionnaire, the survey underwent content validation by three (3) experts: (1) a research professional and licensed teacher, (2) an engineer, and (3) a registered psychometrician.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers implemented the plan to administer the survey questionnaire to the selected colleges in Bulacan State University. Due to a limited time frame, the researchers employed a digital survey form via Google Forms to gather data and distribute the survey to the respondents. Participants were provided informed consent after being briefed on the purpose of the study on the first page of the form, where they were also assured of the confidentiality of their responses. The survey's distribution continued until the required sample size for each college department was achieved. Upon completion, the data were securely stored and analyzed to identify patterns and correlations between doomscrolling habits and the overall well-being of undergraduate students at Bulacan State University.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data collected from the survey were arranged according to their respective sections: doomscrolling habits, overall physical, emotional, and mental health, as well as coping and management strategies. These data were analyzed and interpreted through descriptive and correlational statistical techniques. This study employed a survey questionnaire composed of multiple-choice items and a 5-point Likert scale to enhance efficiency and clarity of the survey instrument.

Frequency and percentage distributions summarized the demographic and digital profiling of the respondents to present a proportional breakdown of the various age, gender, and frequency of internet usage categories. The weighted mean was used as a descriptive statistic to find the measures of central tendency for responses regarding certain experiences of being engaged in the act of doomscrolling and well-being distress. The resulting means were interpreted using existing interval scales. To address the study's correlational objectives, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson's r) was applied to determine the connection of doomscrolling to the overall physical, emotional, and mental health. Finally, a descriptive ranking was used to determine the most effective coping and management strategies.

Table 1. Likert Scale Interpretation Table

Mean Interval	Verbal Interpretation
4.21 - 5.00	Always / Strongly Agree
3.41 - 4.20	Often / Agree

2.61 - 3.40	Sometimes / Neutral
1.81 - 2.60	Rarely / Disagree
1.00 - 1.80	Never / Strongly Disagree

The table presented above shows statistical scale used to interpret the weighted mean of the respondents' scores for both doomscrolling frequency and well-being levels. The researchers utilized a 5-point Likert scale which provides a structured framework for quantifying responses, ranging from a mean interval of 1.00–1.80 (Never/ Strongly Disagree) to 4.21–5.00 (Always/Strongly Agree). This interpretive guide ensures that the numerical data gathered from the respondents were accurately translated into verbal descriptions which reflected the intensity of their digital habits and holistic health status.

Table 2. Correlation Strength Interpretation Table

Mean Interval	**Verbal Interpretation**
± 0.91 – ± 1.00	Very Strong Correlation
± 0.71 – ± 0.90	High / Strong Correlation
± 0.41 – ± 0.70	Moderate Correlation
± 0.21 – ± 0.40	Small / Weak Correlation
± 0.00 – ± 0.20	Negligible / Very Weak Correlation
0.00	No Correlation

Table 2 presents the criteria used to interpret the magnitude of the relationship between doomscrolling frequency and student well-being. This scale allows the researchers to determine the strength of the relationship of the variables, where a value approaching ± 1.00 indicates a nearly perfect linear relationship, while values closer to 0.00 suggest no correlation between the variables. This interpretive guide is necessary for translating the results of the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) into valuable verbal descriptions, ranging from "No Correlation" to a "Very Strong Correlation".

Ethical Considerations

To ensure the confidentiality and privacy of all respondents in the study, the survey instrument did not require the respondents' personal information, such as their names, or any sensitive personal information. Participation was voluntary, and with the respondent's consent, without any form of coercion, pressure, or external incentives, ensuring that the collected data reflects genuine experience. Lastly, all respondents were given a brief overview of how their responses would be utilized, as well as data disposal after the research was published.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The final sample consisted of 70 undergraduate college students from Bulacan State University's Main Campus. To eliminate researcher bias, the systematic selection was applied by choosing only the even-numbered colleges on the list, across seven (7) college departments namely: College of Arts and Letters (CAL), College of Criminal Justice Education (CCJE), College of Information and Communications Technology (CICT), College of Law (CLaw), College of Engineering (COE), College of Science (CS), and College of Social Sciences and Philosophy (CSSP). The purposive quota sampling was effective in setting a goal for the number of respondents, which is ten (10) per department, ensuring an equal distribution of data and fair representation for each program.

Table 3. Daily Average Time Spent Online

Number of Hours	Percentage
Less than 2	2%
2 - 4	20%
5 - 7	44%
7 or more	34%

This distribution, shown in the table above, reveals that the majority of the students are heavy internet users and can also be interpreted as highly prone individuals who possess negative online behaviour, with 20% spending at least 2 to 4 hours online daily and a combined total of 78% spending at least 5 hours a day online. This high level of connectivity aligns with the findings of Alcausen et al. (2025), who stated that students spending longer hours online often face signs of addictive internet use and that longer durations of engagement can lead to detrimental effects.

Table 4. Frequency of Doomscrolling Habits

Questions	Mean	Interpretation
I spend more time scrolling through social media than I initially planned.	4.40	Always
I find myself losing track of time while scrolling through negative news or distressing social media posts.	4.13	Often
I feel a compulsive urge to check for updates on tragic, crisis, or global events.	4.09	Often
I continue to read distressing comments or threads even when they make me feel uncomfortable or anxious.	3.91	Often
I find it difficult to stop scrolling through negative content even when I have important tasks or academic requirements to do.	3.84	Often
I check social media for news or updates immediately before sleeping or upon waking up.	4.34	Always
Overall	**4.12**	**Often**

The distribution in Table 4 shows an overwhelming overall mean of 4.12, interpreted as “Often”. This result indicates that doomscrolling is a widespread habit among the respondents. These findings also suggest that the majority of the students who often doomscroll daily are negatively affected by their sleep, academic tasks, self-control, and time management. This aligns with Social Media Addiction Theory proposed by Griffith (2005), specifically the concept of salience and tolerance, in which social media becomes a dominant activity in students' daily life, and over time, they require longer periods of engagement to achieve satisfaction. As well as conflict and relapse components, wherein behavioral addiction interferes with necessary life domains, such as education.

Table 5. Physical Health Well-Being Level

Questions	Mean	Interpretation
I feel physically tired or exhausted after long hours of scrolling.	4.19	Agree

My late-night digital habits often lead me to sacrifice sleep hours, leaving me feeling drained the next day.	4.47	Strongly Agree
I frequently experience physical discomforts, such as eye strain or headaches, after a session of online browsing.	4.39	Strongly Agree
Overall	**4.35**	**Strongly Agree**

In Table 5, the distribution illustrates an overall computed mean of 4.35 interpreted as "Strongly Agree", indicating a very high level of physical distress. This shows that doomscrolling has a serious, detrimental impact on the physical health of the respondents. Particularly, exhaustion, lack of sleep, eye strain, and headaches. This result is further reinforced by the study of Ananth and Sundar (2025), which shows that doomscrolling is a key factor in poor sleep quality and digital burnout. Additionally, Alcausen et al. (2025) supported this by stating that extended durations of online engagement led to specific physical difficulties, including delayed sleep and increased daytime fatigue.

Table 6. Emotional Health Well-Being Level

Questions	Mean	Interpretation
Excessive scrolling makes me feel anxious, uneasy, or "on edge."	4.26	Strongly Agree
I feel emotionally drained or irritable after spending long periods reading negative content online.	4.33	Strongly Agree
I find it difficult to maintain a positive outlook after spending time "doomscrolling" through tragic events.	4.29	Strongly Agree
Overall	**4.29**	**Strongly Agree**

Table 6 displays an overall calculated mean of 4.29, interpreted as "Strongly Agree," indicating a very high level of frequency of emotional distress among the respondents. The results imply that the majority of the respondents feel anxious, irritable, emotionally drained, and have difficulty having a positive outlook after long periods of doomscrolling. These findings validate the Social Media Addiction Theory by Griffiths (2005), which proposes that social media are used to alter emotional states, often resulting in psychological conflict. Additionally, the data aligns with Shabahang et al. (2024), who stated that habitual doomscrolling generates a form of "vicarious trauma," explaining why respondents find it difficult to maintain a positive outlook. Usman et al. (2025) further support this, noting that doomscrolling is strongly positively correlated with emotional weariness.

Table 7. Mental Health Well-Being Level

Questions	Mean	Interpretation
I experience "mental fog" or a lack of mental clarity after being immersed in online content for several hours.	4.34	Strongly Agree
I feel mentally exhausted after prolonged internet use, making it hard to process new information.	4.24	Strongly Agree
I find it mentally draining to keep up with the constant stream of negative news and digital updates.	4.29	Strongly Agree
Overall	**4.29**	**Strongly Agree**

The distribution in Table 7 shows an overall mean of 4.29, interpreted as "Strongly Agree," which suggests that students frequently experience mental strain when subject to excessive online content, which may imply the presence of doomscrolling behaviour. This indication supports the idea of Muhtar et al. (2025) that doomscrolling is closely related to emotional distress and anxiety, and reduced mental well-being among students. Similarly, Mathur (2025) explained that continuous scrolling leads to mental fatigue and reduced emotional regulation.

Table 8. Academic Well-Being Level

Questions	Mean	Interpretation
I often delay or procrastinate on school requirements because I get "stuck" in a cycle of scrolling.	4.41	Strongly Agree
I struggle to maintain focus during lectures or study sessions because my mind is preoccupied with what I saw online.	4.21	Strongly Agree
I feel that my overall academic productivity has decreased because I spend too much energy on digital consumption.	4.36	Strongly Agree
Overall	**4.33**	**Strongly Agree**

In Table 8, the distribution displays an overall computed mean of 4.33, interpreted as "Strongly Agree," which indicates that students face academic difficulties because of spending several hours with online content. This result also suggests that their academic performance and task completion are decreased due to their doomscrolling habits. These findings align with the study of Atienza et al. (2025), which revealed that excessive duration of scrolling negatively impacts both attention span and academic performance.

Table 9. Relationship Between Doomscrolling Habits and Students' Overall Well-Being

Variable Correlated	Pearson's r	p-value	Interpretation
Doomscrolling and Overall Well-being	0.536***	< 0.001	Moderate Positive Correlation

***. Correlation at 0.001 (2-tailed)

Table 9 shows the result of correlational analysis obtained by computing the overall well-being by obtaining each respondent's physical, emotional, mental, and academic well-being means. Afterwards, using the overall well-being and doomscrolling habit, the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated. Pearson-Moment Correlation analysis yielded an r value of 0.536, indicating a moderate positive relationship between doomscrolling and overall well-being. This suggests that as doomscrolling increases, negative impacts on the overall well-being of the respondents also increase. These findings are strongly supported by Social Media Addiction Theory by Griffith (2005), which explains that excessive engagement in rewarding digital activities can develop into behavioral addiction characterized by salience, tolerance, withdrawal, and conflict. The present findings are also coherent with related literature and studies. Punzalan et al. (2024) discovered that doomscrolling among Filipino students was substantially associated with procrastination, poor time management, and negative mental health outcomes. Similarly, Wafa et al. (2024) stated that doomscrolling contributes to anxiety and emotional distress among students.

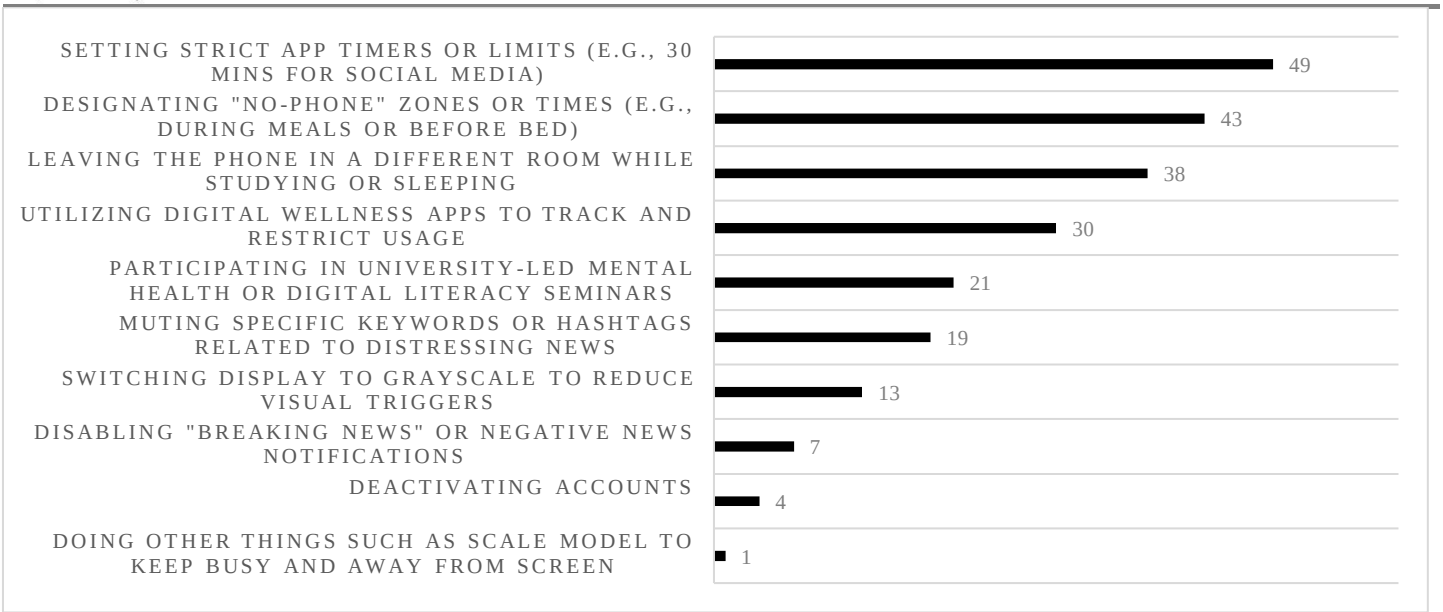

Figure 1. Coping and Management Strategy

Figure 1 illustrates the different strategies the respondents recommended to reduce the impact of doomscrolling. The result indicates that setting strict app timers or limits, designating no-phone zones, and leaving devices in a different place while sleeping or studying are the most effective strategies in reducing doomscrolling behaviour. These results align with the findings of George et al. (2024), who stated that reducing exposure by using digital management strategies helps minimize psychological stress caused by excessive amounts of doomscrolling. To add to this, the emphasis on these limits coincides with Alves' (2021), who stated that engaging in activities such as working or participating physically in other activities can break the cycle of mindless browsing associated with doomscrolling.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to determine the internet usage frequency of the respondents, the prevalence of the doomscrolling habit, and its impact on the overall well-being of the students, which includes their physical, emotional, mental, and academic well-being. The study found that the overwhelming majority of the respondents are heavy internet users, with 78% spending more than 5 hours online, while 20% spending at least 2 to 4 hours online, and only 2% spending less than 2 hours online. Findings also suggest that doomscrolling habits are prevalent among the respondents, with an overall mean of 4.12, which was interpreted as respondents often exhibit doomscrolling behaviours.

Regarding the effect of doomscrolling on the overall well-being of the students, results show a very high level of distress in all areas measured, with an overall well-being mean of 4.31. Distress for physical health yielded a mean of 4.35, emotional and mental health resulted in a mean of 4.29, and a mean of 4.33 for academic well-being. Findings indicate that respondents experienced lack of sleep, mental fog, anxiety, or being on "edge", reduced productivity, and inattention during lectures.

The study also examined the relationship between doomscrolling and the degree of distress with the overall well-being of the respondents. As anticipated, due to the frequency of internet usage of the respondents, findings indicate that there is a moderate positive relationship between doomscrolling and overall well-being distress of the respondents, with a Pearson r correlation coefficient of 0.536, suggesting that as the frequency of doomscrolling increases, the negative impact on the overall well-being of the students also increases.

Concerning the coping and management, findings of the study indicate that 3 most effective strategies to cope with the negative effects of doomscrolling should include setting a strict app timer, designating "no-phone" zones in their place, and leaving devices in a different place when sleeping or studying.

CONCLUSION

After addressing the research questions in this study, the researchers concluded that the majority of the respondents are heavy users of the internet who spend long hours online. Consequently, doomscrolling behaviour has emerged as a common and prevalent habit among the majority of the respondents. Furthermore, statistical analysis confirmed a moderate positive relationship between doomscrolling frequency and the overall well-being distress of the respondents, indicating that as this digital behaviour increases, holistic health is significantly compromised.

RECOMMENDATION

According to the study's findings, doomscrolling has become a widespread habit among most respondents. Statistical analysis revealed a moderate positive correlation between the respondents' overall well-being distress and the frequency of doomscrolling, suggesting that holistic health is seriously compromised as this digital behaviour increases. In line with this:

1. The researchers recommend being aware of the significant influence of doomscrolling on the overall well-being of the participants and its prevalence among students.

2. The researchers recommend that students be encouraged to control their internet usage to prevent the development of negative online behaviour and resist digital lures. Enforce strict app timers or limits, creating no-phone zones in their area, and placing devices in different locations during study or sleep sessions.

3. The educators and university administrators should promote awareness and comprehensive educational campaigns that explain the negative effects of doomscrolling and excessive internet usage, as well as the algorithm mechanics of online platforms used.

4. The Counselors and Health Professionals should recognize the effects of negative online behaviours and integrate digital regulation into counseling. It is also recommended to create training sessions that inform about the effects of excessive usage of the internet and its possible consequences.

5. For future researchers, the researchers recommend attempting to represent a broader demographic by including participants from other universities to see if the “always online” fatigue is the same across different learning environments. This study can be used as a basis for future studies on online behaviour and student well-being.

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