ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26apr1850

The Role of Doomscrolling in Information Overload and Decision-Making Paralysis Among Young Adults

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Publication Date: 2026/05/01

How to Cite: Kritika Dua (2026) The Role of Doomscrolling in Information Overload and Decision-Making Paralysis Among Young Adults. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 11(4), 2682-2705. https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26apr1850

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26apr1850

ABSTRACT

As digital platforms increasingly utilize algorithm-driven reinforcement to provide a relentless stream of crisis-related news, young adults are becoming susceptible to a behavioral pattern known as doomscrolling—the compulsive consumption of negative online content. This study explored the relationship between doomscrolling, information overload (IO), and avoidant decision-making paralysis among N=143 young adults (ages 18–35). Using a cross-sectional quantitative design and a simple random sampling strategy, data were collected through standardized psychometric instruments, including the Doomscrolling Scale, the Information Overload Scale, and the Avoidant Decision-Making Style subscale of the GDMS. Results from Spearman's rank-order correlation revealed significant moderate-to-strong positive associations between all variables, with the strongest correlation found between information overload and decision-making paralysis (ρ= .620, p < .001). Linear regression analyses further confirmed that doomscrolling is a significant statistical predictor, explaining 17.4% of the variance in information overload and 15.1% in avoidant decision-making (p < .001). These findings suggest that excessive engagement with negative digital stimuli saturates cognitive processing capacity, triggering a defensive shutdown where individuals actively retreat from life choices to mitigate psychological stress. The study concludes that the cognitive clog produced by modern media architecture necessitates urgent interventions in digital emotional literacy and platform design to reclaim cognitive resilience in the 18–35 demographic.

Keywords: *Doomscrolling, Information Overload, Decision-Making, Cognitive Load Theory, Decision Paralysis.*

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

A screen lights up, showing endless updates from faraway places. Still, many younger people feel crushed by what they see online. Information rushes in fast - wars, disasters, personal lives on display - all without pause. Instead of feeling informed, some find themselves stuck, pulled into darker thoughts. Psychologists have become observant of the frequency of this occurrence, and is known as Doomscrolling- a behavior that is developed silently after constant repetition. Browsing a screen late at night or when you are sitting around in nothingness - what seems like a harmless distraction has mysteriously gotten to be something more troubling. It is no longer a boredom filler, it has become a kind of escape hatch of stress, and has sucked people even more without their realization. Rather than being an escape, this habitual attraction to bad news chains, keep users in a cycle that they are unable to escape easily and step away from. This study examines the use of the particular practice of doomscrolling. as the main point of entry of all the Information Overload leading to the final state of Decision-Making Paralysis.

Young adults, who are going through the high-stakes developmental process, would be the target population- transitions of career building, financial independent, and identity formation. This digital exhaustion is not the mere annoyance; it is a serious mental obstacle. This study moves further than the superficial level of screen time and social disapproval. Instead, it aims at dissecting the cognitive mechanics of the quality of content we consume determining the quality of the choices we make. In case our mental capabilities are exhausted by a 2:00 AM scroll through servile news, what is left of our executive business when we must make meaningful life choices the following morning?

- *Doomscrolling*

Doomscrolling is one of the most expressive activities in the present digital world, particularly when technological design meets with emotional stress. Some may call it a simple dismissal habit in screen-crazed youth to most of the adults of the younger generation. There are more, overlaying difficulties that the trend cuts deeper. Rather than simply checking updates, they are sucked into circular ruts that cross the boundary between keeping in touch and getting engulfed by the negativity. This is not mere browsing, it becomes a habitual cycle which is hard to break.

A major background to this behavior is provided by Yurdagul et al. (2021), who explored doomscrolling in the context of constant negative internet involvement and obsessive thought processes. They describe it as: The practice of scrolling social media or news feeds, in which a user discovers and is obsessively reading too much of. negative information which may lack any particular objective or the possibility of being able to disengage easily. (Yurdagül et al., 2021).

This concept is important because it underscores the fact that thinking independently is tiresome. Not searching with has purpose anymore, the individual just absorbs what is presented to him. Without a goal in sight, actions are drifting, not fired out at all, but dragged about by accidental perquisites coded into a software, just like gambling lures one gradually. Picture this: a college student works on tasks towards the end of the night, and he clicks on a news application simply to relax. A talk of increasing prices is seen, and then the scenes of environmental destruction are shown. Though exhaustion seeps in and the breath rate accelerates, the fingers keep moving on the screen. In search of answers, perhaps peace, but the stream is not giving any. Designed that way, always just out of reach. What is perceived as individual failure is what Yurdagul et al. (2021) have. Broken exit paths: staying stuck even when it hurts was the title. (The "Pre-Sleep" Trap)

The American Psychological Association (APA) and related researchers classify the motion on doomscrolling as an aspect of maladaptive behavior associated with seeking uncertainty. As Sharma et al. (2022) define it, it is more specific: to search information in times of crisis or perceived threat, and on that note, remain involved with. uncomforting materials despite exacerbating moods of psychological stress, anxiety, or depression" (Sharma et al., 2022).

The most surprising fact about this is the contradictory nature of the actions. Because when worry hits, the mind is inclined to seek solutions, in hopes of putting fears to rest, which is a long, term survival needs. Nevertheless, since the majority of online content is now based on fear, it is founded on based headlines without clear solutions, the reassurance search goes wrong. Imagine a young person with the start of his/her career, being obsessed with notifications as the tension mounts up in government. Every few, another refresh, they say, in order to keep abreast of it. Yet research by Sharma et al. (2022) demonstrates that it is not vigilance, but its recurrence is a result of discomfort. Instead of getting clear first, the mind receives wave after wave of disturbing reports. Long before critical decisions are made in the office, interest has already become thin. Options are blurred, thought is slowed, that hesitation is a reflection of decision paralysis of this paper. (The "CrisisValidation" Loop)

Why does it seem so impossible to quit? B. F. Skinners are working on the ways in which actions are molded by rewards holding a clue. The continuous nonstop swiping is like lever pulling on a gambling machine, hazardous compensations keep you moving. This strikes the most when the rewards arrive at random intervals, such an arrangement is known to fix habits. One moment it is laughter, then another as a shiver of anxiety, with every stroke it was something new. Rewards are accompanied by warning and the mind is ever on the alert. Out of the ordinary times of curiosity, water in sand seem like a discovery. These flashes

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26apr1850

are persistent, and they develop the behavior in the years of repetition. (Skinner, 1953) You are still creating self, find it more difficult to escape than the young minds supposed. Attention narrows, where the world is blurred, drawn to a rhythm that is created by accident and coincidence.

People listen more to bad news than good as it is how we are programmed. Surviving this was handy because of the threats of ancientness. Seeing a patch of berries and jumping over? Annoying. Not seeing a lion nearby? Could end everything. Studies show tough moments are more difficult to get rid of than happy ones, Baumeister et al. (2001) argue. A dark headline shows up, and your brain will immediately wake itself up and that part called the amygdala treats it like danger nearby. Feeling tense? It is scanning its risks, confusing clicks with vigilance, scroll after scroll occurs not out of pleasure, but by impulse to follow what might harm. Digital spaces are familiar with this trend and are influencing content to elicit that inner guard. It is not a coincidence that people respond more to bad news, and it is fundamental in the functioning of minds.

The young adults aged 18-35 are experiencing a mental tug of war due to the fact that their brains develop at varying speeds. Whereas emotions are fast because the limbic system matures early, the decision-making section is sluggish, mostly up to the mid, 20s (Sowell et al., 2003). The continuous reading of bad news leaves the alarm center, the amygdala, active, at the expense of concentration. In a state of concentration depleted, the impulse control is ruined by the constant pressure of the digital world. Reflective judgements are lost in the survival mode. Due to this incompatibility, fast response triumphs over rational thought at all times.

The stage also coincides with the Eriksonian stages of psychological stages; Identity vs. Role Confusion and Intimacy vs. Isolation. Creating their own identities becomes the priority of the younger generation this time around and contacting the real world through establishing ties becomes increasingly pressing at a time when all things appear precarious. Due to this change, keeping up is not only a habit, but rather, something that is ingrained, such as an internal drive to understand what is going on (Erikson, 1968). It was an effort to know what had happened then. At this point, feeds never cease, and it seems that in order to fit in, one needs to keep up. Missing a big news could mean you are left behind either at work or among friends. That is more than just worry, it is connected with a sense of safety and being perceived by people surrounding you. Reading through depressing news is like holding a fistful of confusion rather than unknowns.

One of the major factors that make this possible in 2026 has got to do with money and society. Youths are achieving life objectives later in life, getting well-paying jobs, buying houses, and being on their own. It is impossible to feel in control of such factors as economic variations, rising temperature, or political anarchy, so the focus is shifted to other areas: screen time. Instead of looking at the forces that are not reachable, the eyes double, the thumbs swipe. Reading endless updates provide some sort of anchor although the news hurt. It is easy to begin to think of hard times as less of personal deficiencies when it all seems to shake like a junky. This is a sadistic sort of relief. Nevertheless, it reinforces what seems to be a circle of terror: as long as one remains attentive to alarming news, it becomes harder to get out of it, and every step towards it, such as resumes or changing of residence, becomes progressively more difficult to make.

- *Information Overload*

In case the means of delivery is doomscrolling, information overload is the destructive accumulation. It happens when the amount of information received is too much to be handled by the brain, processed, and stored. To young adults in the 2026 digital environment, this is more than just getting too many emails it is a total overload of working memory. Information overload acts as the bottleneck to the brain because it is associated with the doomscrolling habit and the resultant failure to make any meaningful decisions.

Among the most used and substantiated definitions comes as a result of the extensive literature review done by Eppler and Mengis (2004). They conceptualize information overload as a systems problem: “It is the situation where the amount of information entering a system exceeds the capability of the system to process it. In case an individual does not have enough time to process too much information, the quality of the decisions made is likely to decline (Eppler and Mengis, 2004).

This definition is more practical since it focuses on time pressure. Whenever a young adult doomscrolls, they are bombarded with information at a rate (in bits per second) that surpasses the prefrontal cortex. This produces a mental bottleneck: the mind perceives the incoming information, the headlines, but cannot process it properly, to get a deeper understanding of the matter, and it can be called a mental short-circuit. Consider a case of a 24-year-old browsing through his phone on his way to work during a short train ride. In ten minutes, they are exposed to an inflation headline, a climate change informative post, three opinion articles on a world war, and a viral post on the threats of AI. Eppler and Mengis (2004) say that this overwhelms their cognitive capacity in the first two minutes. Before they even get to the office, they have already developed what is called residual fatigue, when they are mentally drained even before they have begun their actual employment. Their brain has been at its top capacity. Therefore, they find it hard to choose a project when their manager requests them to make a decision on two projects. The excessive workload has exhausted the mind power to make sound judgment.

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26apr1850

In the present, systems-focused view, Roetzel (2019) provides an explanation that is both more complex and noisy, reflective of the contemporary, digital world: A condition of psychological distress in the inability to extract meaning in a large amount of complex, conflicting, or redundant information, leading to a perception of a lack of control over the environment (Roetzel, 2019).

This definition acquires even greater meaning because of the term contradictory. Young adults do not just receive news that is being reported to them, they are witnessing conflicting visions, provocative remarks, and professional differences of opinion, in a half-minute of scrolling. This flood of contentious information requires a lot of mental work to evaluate what is true, and in the short-term, this overloads cognitive resources that are required by an individual when deciding. Take the example of a person in their 20s doing their research on retirement savings and at the same time being subjected to the terrifying news about an economic crash on the same Internet feed. In this case, the idea of Roetzel (2019) is quite obvious: the data is excessive and contradictory to itself. The mind finds it hard to reconcile long-term planning with the worries of crisis being experienced in the near future, causing psychological stress in which the more one is exposed, the less he or she understands. This in the long run tends to result in total disengagement- a mental shutdown.

Cognitive Load Theory (CLT) (Sweller, 1988) provides one of the most vital frameworks on a theoretical level. Sweller suggested that there are rigid limitations to working memory and beyond which, learning and good decision-making is no longer possible. CLT divides mental effort into three types: Intrinsic (the difficulty of the material inherent to it), Germane (actions trying to comprehend and encode knowledge), and Extraneous (distractions that are not relevant to the material). Doomscrolling produces excessive extraneous load. It floods the mind with emotionally charged emotionally urgent-seeming content that does not go anywhere. Once the working memory is clogged with this unproductive noise, it has little space to carry out the germane processing which is what is required to reflect, to make connections between ideas and to make meaningful decisions in life. Effectively, the cognitive system of the brain becomes overwhelmed, and it cannot cope with the burden of an excessive number of emotionally straining, background processes occurring simultaneously.

Annie Lang (2000) introduced a model that considers the mind to be an information processing system that allocates in limited cognitive resources to three processes occurring simultaneously encoding stimuli as it comes, decoding the meaning of the stimuli, and retaining it to be re-utilized in future. At the heart of Media Psychology, the theory argues that the processes are based on some common mental reservoir. In cases where the attention required is too high i.e. when emotionally manipulative doom content is involved, resources to understand and remember are exhausted. This can lead young adults to think that they are knowledgeable because they just read and assimilated news but cannot apply it to their personal lives because they have spent all thinking ability responding to it instead of thinking about it.

It is well known that short-term memory has a capacity of about seven items of information at the time, with two variations to the right or left. Miller (1956) observed this famous argument. However, in an average 60 seconds when using social media, a young adult can be exposed to dozens of informational bits and pieces; news snippets, conflicting remarks, adverts, and upsetbreaking viral activity. This deluge rewrites the working memory on several occasions, and there is minimal opportunity to consolidate it. This unending turnover leads to Cognitive Fatigue, a state whereby the brain is overwhelmed and loses its engagement, and it can hardly make simple decision making.

One of the primary reasons why the Information Overload in this age cohort should be examined is its impact on the Prefrontal Cortex (PFC), which is the executive center of the brain that performs the functions of planning, decision-making, and emotional control. With young adults being bombarded with loads of information all day, the filtering mechanisms of the brain simply cannot process the information as effectively as in a Denial-of-Service attack paralyzes a server. Studies indicate that this is not a case of indifference but a biological reaction: the noise is taking up all the mental bandwidth and there is little left to meaningful signals. This depletion of executive is one reason why burnout is so common among Millennials and Gen z. The modern-day information space has already exceeded the useful limits, into a state of pathological overload. Of special interest is the Inversion Point the point at which growing knowledge starts to diminish agency. To a generation who has significant life choices regarding a place to live, career, and climate, the information paralysis is not only personal, but is also a larger social problem.

Young adults are the first generation to have been continuously partially attentive. Focusing on this variable, it explains that the brain is not allowed to enter into a state of Deep Work due to an endless flow of digital micro-information (news alerts, memes, texts). This is very vital to Applied Psychology as it explains why this group is continuously experiencing mental fog. They are not just not thinking, they are thinking too many dissimilar things at once and this prevents the consolidation of memory and the creation of a strong sense of self-identity.

Information overload is a developmental tragedy because it burdens young adults with the issues of the entire world before they have a chance to address their own.

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➢ *Decision-Making Paralysis*

Decision-Making Paralysis is the last and possibly most crippling stage of this digital fatigue. This is more than just "procrastination" in applied psychology; it's a functioning breakdown of the executive network. My research focuses particularly on avoidant decision-making, even though this characteristic is frequently quantified using metrics like procrastination (the act of delaying the choice), hypervigilance (a preoccupation with searching for more evidence), or buck-passing (handing over the choice to others). This particular maladaptive approach occurs when a person intentionally avoids making decisions altogether rather than merely postponing them.

The human brain uses the greatest energy when making decisions. The brain's capacity to weigh options and make a decision is weakened in a never-sleeping digital environment. For those in the 18–35 age range, this takes the form of a deeply ingrained psychological defense in which they choose not to participate in the decision-making process at all. Every new choice, from a professional change to a straightforward social interaction, is seen by the brain as a threat to its limited energy when it is overwhelmed by the gloom of the scrolling and the maze of information overload. When the adult in the young adult opts to avoid, he or she is not being lazy but is falling back to a survival-focused stagnation to deplete a depleted brain battery.

A basic description of this phenomenon by Iyengar and Lepper (2000) was known as Analysis Paralysis, the work of which about choice overload was seminal and altered our understanding of human agency. This paralysis according to Iyengar and Lepper (2000) is characterized as a state of over-analyzing (or over-thinking) a situation to the extent that a decision or action is never taken effectively paralyzing the outcome because the apparent cost of making a wrong choice is greater than the perceived benefit of the particular choice.

In a practical approach, this definition explains the strain that young adults are going through. It would appear to be a million times more costly to make such a professional choice to a 22-year-old who is doomscrolling over a crashing economy. The brain is sucked into a downward spiral of seeking more information so as to get the right answer- information which in this case with the overload of information just does not exist.

Our specific variable is based on the work of Scott and Bruce (1995) who have developed a specific kind of inventory, the General Decision-Making Style (GDMS) inventory. Avoidant decision-making is defined as follows: "A decision-making style marked by the tendency to avoid the decision-making process whenever possible." In order to lessen the instantaneous psychological strain of the decision task, the person adopts a reactive, defensive stance in which they attempt to delay or disregard the necessity of making a decision (Scott & Bruce, 1995).

This definition emphasizes that avoidance is a method for lowering stress. Opting out of a decision is not a sign of apathy for the 18–35 age group; rather, it indicates that the instant mental strain of their digital world has made making a decision feel like an imminent danger to their survival. Take a 24-year-old graduate, for instance, who has been doomscrolling about the demise of entry-level jobs and the coming of AI automation. Two job offers are made to them. According to Scott & Bruce (1995), the negative information they have been exposed to increases the psychological strain of having to choose between a stable but dull career and a hazardous but exciting startup. They encounter a complete system crash rather than considering the advantages and disadvantages. They finally cease responding to emails from both recruiters and stay out of the process until both offers are withdrawn. By eliminating the task entirely, they have effectively reduced the stress associated with it.

The gold standard for comprehending decisional stress is the Conflict Theory of Decision Making (Janis & Mann, 1977). According to Janis and Mann, humans undergo a particular kind of psychological stress known as decisional conflict when faced with difficult decisions. A person resorts to defensive avoidance when they believe there are significant risks associated with every alternative. Examples of it are procrastinating, blaming others, or deliberately neglecting information that requires one to make a choice. Doomscrolling leads young adults to the belief that everything is problematic, be it their personal or professional lives. Janis and Mann (1977) argue that the red flag is essentially raised by the brain when a tension of the dispute is unbearable. This forms the gist of the avoidant style: this is a psychological escape door which is installed to escape the pain of making a decision between seemingly hopeless alternatives.

Adolescents aged between 18 and 25 are in a developmental dilemma: they have to make major life choices and their inner editor as a brain is not fully developed as yet. They think that there can be no room to make a mistake in a fated world since they do not have a long-term history of personal hardiness, a factor that makes them have high-stakes choice anxiety. This perception of insecurity leads to defensive avoidance over the careful analysis of the situation because it is safer to stay in the same position than to choose to move in what the internet has defined as a dead end. They attempt to stay with the sense of control by essentially halting their clock of growth, not knowing that the evasion is a permanent, and often very detrimental life-choice.

The move of the developmental urge shifts to that of isolation and generativity to intimacy as we age to the 26–35 age bracket (Erikson, 1968). Such a population is often called upon to make complicated choices, like maintaining a career and at the same time consider becoming a wife or husband, buying a house or having a family. To them, the Avoidant Decision-Making concerns more Cognitive Satiety than Fear of the Future. The executive battery of a 30-year-old expires as he or she manages to

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26apr1850

go through a day of doomscrolling and information saturation. They are afflicted with what is termed as decision fatigue in the clinical practice. Avoidant technique becomes a survival method in such a case.

The constant emergence of peer highlight reels leads to the perfection requirement that is fueled, a unique modern-day challenge to the entire 18-35 age group. Consequently, the young adult gets a chronic disorder called Anticipatory Regret whereby the person is paralysed by the fear that the choice they make would be less superior to the alternatives that they see online, which are endless and idealized. When digital contrast is added to a pessimistic perspective, person enters into Avoidant Stasis, seeking the perfect alternative to what he or she feels is an inherently flawed world. In the case of the brain, Janis and Mann (1977) claim that avoidance is the only mechanism that is used by the brain to shun the pain of potential failure when a safe choice appears inaccessible. This causes a state of developmental freeze when the person ceases to plan his/her future which no longer seems to be successful to him/her.

Therefore, doomscrolling is a major digital behavior that serves as a kind of neurological bottleneck, especially when it targets the immature brain of young adults that have not reached equilibrium in maturation. This preference of immediate perceived threats, over the complex information processing of long-term planning, serves as the primary access point to Information Overload, where an enormous flood of contradictory and redundant information overwhelms the prefrontal cortex processing ability. In the end, this mental fatigue results in Avoidant Decision-Making Paralysis, a survival-oriented psychological withdrawal in which individuals shy away from crucial life decisions—like career development and identity establishment—to alleviate the intense stress stemming from a chaotic informational environment.

- *Research Gaps*

Something big has shifted. Young people now face a flood of online material, swirling amid worldwide instability. Not like before, when seeking news meant focus and choice. Doomscrolling shows how habits have cracked, pulled again and again toward bleak headlines without pause or gain. The mind's early, warning network gets swamped, stuck on high alert, leaving little room for calm decisions or forward thought. Between the age of 18 and 35, many find screens once used to reach others now drain clarity, dull insight, wear down awareness over time.

Something strange occurs within the mind when screens occupy your days not only fatigue, but a sort of paralysis when choosing a course ahead that is termed Decision-making Paralysis. Too much bewildering news, particularly frightening items bouncing about the internet, does not just slow the brain down, over the long run it changes the manner of choice being made. Rather than trying to make a decision, others begin to avoid decisions altogether such as withdrawing to the side of a fire. It may appear to be laziness, perhaps, to an outsider, yet, in actuality, this is, in fact, more akin to bracing to impact such as Avoidant Decision-Making. The movement of today seems unsafe after receiving too many warnings of what might happen tomorrow. Not doing now appears to be safer than doing something. That hesitation? Not emptiness. A full cup, spilling over.

The difference between this research and previous literature is that it seeks the point of breaking where having excessive data slows down decisions. Understanding how that works is important in creating tools that will assist individuals to regulate feelings on the Internet and not merely record screen time. In its essence, the project seeks to provide practical ways of enhancing mental attention so that the adults between the ages of 18 and 35 years can navigate the oversaturated digital environments whilst remaining in control of their decisions.

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26apr1850

CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The majority of the recent research by Sharpe et al. (2026) presents doomscrolling as the obsessive use of negative information on the internet and creates it in the context of habitual behavior supported by digital design. Their scoping review describes it as a loop of perpetuation through the infinity of scrolling and algorithmic circulation that thrives on the intolerance to ambiguity of a user. This emphasis on structure also finds its reflection in the article by Ahluwalia (2025), in which he describes the mechanism in three particular ways: cognitive resources depletion, emotional regulation, and attention fragmentation. Although both of them acknowledge that the habit is compulsive, Ahluwalia offers a more detailed neuropsychological account of it by stating that doomscrolling triggers a paradoxical loop in which the information-seeking intended to alleviate uncertainty increases cognitive load instead.

Building upon the idea of Doomscrolling, the definition of Dixit and Ashutosh (2025) shifts the focus on the personal level to the macro-level phenomena. They suggest an outline to crisis-based doomscrolling by stating that the practice results in a condition of collective stress, and a sense of threat as permeated throughout the society. It is the opposite of the previous interests of Sharma et al. (2022), the preliminary work of which was largely interested in defining the concept of doomscrolling as a specific psychometric entity. To demonstrate that doomscrolling is not entirely the same as the general use of social media, Sharma and colleagues formulated a 15-item scale that correlates doomscrolling with online vigilance and a lack of self-control.

The latest sources by Suryani (2025) divide the causes of doomscrolling into psychological (stress, anxiety), cognitive-behavioral (FOMO, digital multitasking), and personal (neuroticism, lack of self-control) ones. This classification is reflected in the results of Doğan Laçin and Kiye (2025) who find that the habit has a strong predictor in the maladaptive sub-dimension of emotion regulation, that is, suppressing negative emotions instead of reappraising them. Both articles concur that bad emotional regulation is one of the main drivers of the behavior, but Suryani (2025) includes the socio-technological aspect and posits that the effect of the algorithmic reinforcement can work together with these internal characteristics to make Gen-Z predisposed to it.

To enlarge the meaning of personal powerlessness, Zainab and Ahmad (2025) add a crucial psychological process called learned helplessness. Their study on young adults (1829) shows that obsessive consumption of negative material intensifies the sense of powerlessness which in turn enhances existential thoughts about fate and meaninglessness. It stands in a strong opposition to the preceding study conducted by Sharma et al. (2022), who paid less attention to existential dread and more to behavioural characteristics of online vigilance and the internet as the primary antecedents. Whereas Zainab and Ahmad (2025) consider the habit a transition to existential anxiety, Sharma et al. (2022) perceive it as an inability to control one's self and the continuation of information-seeking characteristics.

Ayalon and Aharony (2025) present the most up-to-date research on the relationship between information-seeking behavior and digital well-being in the delicate balance. Their findings develop a positive relationship between active information-seeking and information overload. Surprisingly, and contrary to most literature where IO is a state of utter negativity, their study found that overload and digital well-being were unexpectedly positively correlated during conflict times, implying that knowing can offer a feeling of security that temporarily neutralizes the load stress. This is in contrast to Ahluwalia (2025) who puts the transition more drastically as a cognitive clog. The mechanism is described by Ahluwalia as a saturation of the evolutionary threat-detection system of the human brain, which is maladaptive in the case of unlimited digital streams of news.

Another striking similarity between these years is that it has almost become a shared belief that having more data does not result in better decisions, but rather serves as an effective obstacle. Yousef et al. (2025) blame the nature of the feedback loops powered by dopamine in the existing platforms that impedes cognitive health, and users can hardly take a step back and have clarity. This makes the previous conclusions of Fukukura et al. (2013) difficult to understand, as they have shown that psychological distancing would succeed in ameliorating the decision-making process in information overload situations by enabling the brain to make the gist of data. This illustrates that though a solution (distancing) had been known since 2013, the modern digital architecture (as mentioned in present time) has made the solution more difficult to implement.

To further expand the concept of IO, the Goel (2025) introduces the idea that the shift to overload extends beyond mental exhaustion and is possibly based on some type of digital dissociation. This study advocates that too much exposure to distressing content causes the attentional fatigue and a disturbed sense of self-awareness. It goes in line with Sharma et al. (2022), who observe that the continuous allocation of threatening stimuli exhausts the mental bandwidth of young adults, which they call the process of cognitive resources depletion. The similarity in this case is the attention to the biological cost of the transition, however, the study of the dissociation lays stress on the clinical alienation to the reality, and Sharma et al. pay attention to the fatigue of the processing system.

The recent study by Hussain et al. (2025) puts a direct correlation between multiscreen addiction, doomscrolling, and so-called digital burnout in young adults. The analysis, which is quantitative in nature, shows that these behaviors are the positive

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26apr1850

predictors of burnout, which means that the continuous transitioning between the screens with negative content results in a state of complete mental and emotional fatigue. This is consistent with the Goel (2025) that presents these consequences in terms of a clinical prism by relating the excessive exposure to the initial indications of the dissociative experience. Although Hussain et al. pay attention to the burnout or burden of the activity, the detachment of reality, such as a time distortion, cognitive fog, and impaired selfawareness are stressed in the dissociation study. They both concur that the habits are indicative of a process that has high clinical importance to Gen Z.

The latest source by Yousef and others (2025) examines the so-called brain rot as the mental drained-ness of the human mind and the deterioration of the cognitive processes due to the overload with poor-quality high-frequency digital media. They indicate that such over-consumption particularly affects the executive functioning skills, which are the memory, planning and decision-making skills. Ahluwalia (2025) supports this claim by showing that long-term doomscrolling has quantifiable negative cognitive performance. Although they both conclude that the outcome is a decline in mental health, Ahluwalia goes into more details of the triple-pathway of mental resource depletion, emotional regulation collapse, and attention fragmentation that physically strains the processing capability of the brain.

Further examining the type of personality, Singh and Narula (2024) discovered that Neuroticism is positively related to psychological distress among Gen-Z students. Their exploratory analysis also discovered a positive and unexpected positivity between Agreeableness and doomscrolling ($r = 0.32$), indicating that more empathetic people may be more inclined to the behavior as they may wish to be informed of the tragedy of others. This is consistent with Shabahang et al (2023), who contend that negativity bias, which is an evolutionary preference to focus on threatening information, is a stable characteristic that drives the desire to scroll. Nevertheless, there is a sharp difference in their findings: where Shabahang et al. (2023) report a consistent association of the habit with the lack of life satisfaction and anxiety in future, Singh and Narula (2024) in fact estimate a negative correlation between doomscrolling and psychological distress in their sample, indicating that in some cases, the habit may be considered a temporary (yet, maladaptive) distraction.

George et al. (2024) and Shabahang et al. (2023) consider the corrosivity of the decisional stasis. George et al. define a stress hangover as the state of elevated worrying and physical arousal which resembles the PTSD symptoms. Shabahang et al. give this a complement by demonstrating that the motivation to prevent unhealthy behaviors negatively correlates with doomscrolling, which inhibits health consciousness. They both hold that the ultimate result is the state of Avoidant Decision-Making where the person is biologically and psychologically exhausted to such a point that the person just chooses not to make decisions about their own life.

The initial background views presented by Price et al. (2022) and Ytre-Arne and Moe (2021) based the idea on the uniqueness of the COVID-19 pandemic. Price et al. (2022) defined that the strength of the effect of doomscrolling is regularly regulated by previous psychological vulnerabilities of a user. Ytre-Arne & Moe (2021), on the contrary, examined the situational quality of the habit and found that users tend to alternate between enhanced monitoring and conscious news avoidance as a coping mechanism. Whereas Price dwells on the clinical rise in PTSD and depression symptoms, Ytre-Arne and Moe emphasize on the human aspect of attempting to strike a balance between the antagonistic demands of information and emotional aloofness.

To identify the hidden brain activity when making decisions in the situation of information overload, Peng et al. (2021) applied the Event-Related Potentials (ERPs). Their findings on neurophysiology indicated that consumers allocate lesser attentional resources (resulting in less positive P2 amplitudes) and have more difficulty in making a decision (smaller P3 amplitudes) when presented with large amounts of information. This gives a biological explanation to what Fukukura et al. (2013) found behaviorally, namely that decision-making with information saturation always results in suboptimal results. Although both Peng et al. and Fukukura et al. focus on the neural shortcuts and regrets in decision processes, Fukukura et al. focus on the lack of memory, stating that the brain becomes unable to sort the information into a gist or essential meaning when it becomes overwhelmed.

Another point of comparison is the way people will deal with the saturation. This is qualitatively supported by Ytre-Arne and Moe (2021), who found that during the COVID-19 lockdown, even the most connected citizens used news avoidance as a situational survival strategy to cope with being overwhelmed. Dai et al. (2020) use the cognition-affectconation framework to show that information overload directly triggers information avoidance intention. They argue that users adopt moderate strategies, like avoidance, to cope with fatigue and dissatisfaction without completely abstaining from social media. These studies share the fact that avoidance is a defense mechanism; however, the difference here is that Dai et al. offer a quantitative model of the intention but Ytre-Arne and Moe give qualitative information about the human experience of the desire to disconnect.

As per another perspective, Ytre-Arne and Moe (2021), who observed Norwegians during the early COVID-19 lockdown noted that users felt overwhelmed by updated news streams, leading to a situational strategy of news avoidance to protect their emotional energy. Moving back to foundational predictors, Schmitt et al. (2018) provide a comprehensive survey (N=419) identifying that younger people with less information-seeking self-efficacy are significantly more susceptible to experiencing IO. They argue that as the Internet provides massive amounts of heterogeneous and diverse sources, the difficulty of evaluating and

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26apr1850

selecting relevant information increases. While Schmitt et al. focus on the competence of the user to manage data, Ytre-Arne and Moe highlight the emotional drainage as the primary driver of the overload experience.

➢ *Research Gaps*

Psychologists may know that a pandemic can create feelings of helplessness, but there is a disconnect in documenting how this digital learned helplessness seeps into a decisional style. Typically, studies consider paralysis to be a transitory response to stress rather than an adaptive and defensive behaviour. This study is redressing this disconnect by using the Scott and Bruce (1995) subscale to show a possible enduring shift towards an Avoidant Style. It is offering a much-needed perspective on decisional conflict in the 18-35 category, revealing that for many, the paralysis is a defensive strategy, rather than apathy, in response to an online world they believe to be unnavigable.

The literature overwhelmingly focuses on the emotional implications of digital media use, frequently connecting doomscrolling to higher levels of anxiety, depression and PTSD. But there is a major gap in the understanding of how these feelings translate into the functional paralyis of life goals. This research shifts the focus from how young adults feel to their level of functioning, by examining decisional impairment. This study is exploring the change in how a person relates to the world, from a person being unhappy to a person being stuck.

The construct of Information Overload has been historically limited to organisational psychology (productivity) or marketing (market choice). There is a clear contextual blindspot to how this cognitive jam affects critical life-stage decision-making. This study is bringing traditional theories of cognitive saturation (using Williamson, Eaker, and Lounsbury 2012) into the realm of global crises and identity.

➢ *Objectives of the Study*

- To examine the relationship between Doomscrolling and Information Overload among young adults
- To examine the relationship between Information Overload and avoidant style Decision-Making Paralysis among young adults
- To examine the relationship between Doomscrolling and avoidant style Decision-Making Paralysis among young adults
- To determine the impact of Doomscrolling on Information Overload and avoidant style Decision-Making Paralysis among young adults

➢ *Hypotheses of the Study*

- H1: Doomscrolling would have a significantly positive relationship with Information Overload among young adults
- H2: Information overload would have a significantly positive relationship with avoidant style Decision-Making Paralysis among young adults
- H3: Doomscrolling would have a significantly positive relationship with avoidant style Decision-Making Paralysis among young adults
- H4: Doomscrolling would significantly predict Information Overload and avoidant style Decision-Making Paralysis among young adults

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26apr1850

CHAPTER THREE
METHOD

➢ *Research Design*

This study uses a quantitative research design to measure doomscrolling, information overload, and decision-making paralysis in an objective manner. In particular, a cross-sectional survey design was used, enabling the collecting of data from a varied sample of young adults at a single point in time to detect prevalent patterns and connections. When a psychological research wants to examine the prevalence of certain behaviors such as doomscrolling and their direct cognitive implications, this methodology is highly effective in in a particular population.

➢ *Sample and Sampling Technique*

To pin down the peculiarities of the cognitive and behavioral patterns of digital natives, who are especially susceptible to the mental stresses of modern media surroundings, the target population of the study was selected carefully. 143 young adults constitute the target population of the given study. Such a sample size (N=143) provides a sufficient quantitative basis of exploring the connections between executive functioning and digital behaviors. The subjects are belonging to the emerging adult group that is, those between the ages of 18 to 35 years who are in critical life periods and at times when they have to make crucial decisions.

A simple random sampling component was added to lessen selection bias within those reachable groups. To guarantee that every available person had an equal chance of being invited, participants in public spaces (such as libraries or workplaces) were chosen for both the modes (offline and online) collection of data.

- *Inclusion Criteria*

✓ Participants must be between 18-35 years of age to qualify as young adults
✓ Individuals must be active social media users who utilize digital platforms as a primary or secondary source for news consumption
✓ Participants must have regular access to a smartphone or digital device
✓ Willing to provide informed consent

- *Exclusion Criteria*

✓ Individuals below the age of 18 or above the age of 35 were excluded to prevent age-related cognitive differences
✓ Individuals who do not use social media or who consume news exclusively through traditional, non-scrolling media (like physical newspapers)
✓ Inability to provide informed consent

➢ *Psychometric Instrumentation*

- *Doomscrolling Scale (DS)*

The Doomscrolling Scale, created by Sharma et al. (2022), was used to gauge doomscrolling. The measure was created to evaluate obsessive social media platform involvement with upsetting content and bad news. In particular, it gauges compulsive cravings, continuous checking habits, and intrusive thoughts associated with ingesting unfavorable news updates. Since the scale is unidimensional, every question assesses the same single idea (doomscrolling). It uses a 7-point Likert Scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Somewhat Disagree
4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
5 = Somewhat Agree
6 = Agree
7 = Strongly Agree

There are no trick or reverse-coded questions. A higher number always means more doomscrolling. The total score will fall between 15 (Minimum) and 105 (Maximum). It has a very high Cronbach's alpha, α (usually above 0.90), meaning the 15 items are very consistent in what they measure. Also, research shows high stability over time (usually around 0.85 to 0.90). Evidence for construct validity was established through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, which supported a unidimensional structure. Factor Loadings typically range from 0.63 to 0.84, which are very strong. Convergent validity was supported through positive correlations with measures of anxiety and problematic social media use.

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- *Information Overload Scale (IOS)*

The Information Overload Scale, which was first created by Williamson et al. (2012), was used to evaluate information overload. The scale gauges how much people think the information at their disposal is overwhelming, excessive, and challenging to comprehend or assess. Items were contextualized for the current study to represent exposure to news-related information. The 15 statements that make up the IOS focus on the emotional and cognitive burden of knowledge. It uses a 5-point Likert Scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Neutral
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly Agree

There are no reverse-scored items in this scale. The range is 15 to 75. Higher scores indicate that an individual's cognitive processing threshold has been exceeded. Reliability for this scale is consistently high. Original study by Williamson et al (2012) reported Internal Consistency with an alpha of 0.92. Construct validity was supported through factor analysis confirming a unidimensional structure. Convergent Validity shows a strong positive correlation with Perceived Stress (r= approx 0.50 - 0.60) and Information Anxiety.

- *Avoidant Decision-Making Style Subscale of the General Decision-Making Style (GDMS) Inventory*

Avoidant decision-making was measured using the Avoidant Style subscale of the General Decision-Making Style (GDMS) inventory developed by Scott and Bruce (1995). The GDMS assesses five decision-making styles, with the avoidant subscale specifically measuring tendencies to postpone, ignore, or evade decision-making responsibilities. The Avoidant Decision-Making Style subscale consists of 5 items. Responses are recorded on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from:

1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Neutral
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly Agree

Scoring is straightforward because there are no reverse-scored items in the Avoidant subscale. Total scores for the subscale range from 5 to 25, with higher scores reflecting stronger tendencies toward avoidant or paralysed decision-making. The Avoidant subscale consistently shows strong internal reliability, often performing better than some of the other GDMS subscales (like the Spontaneous or Intuitive scales). Scott and Bruce reported an alpha of 0.84 in their original study. Construct validity was supported through confirmatory factor analysis validating the fivefactor model of decision-making styles. The convergent validity was established with positive correlations with procrastination and decision. anxiety (r values of between.42 and.60).

➢ *Data Collection Procedure*

Data Collection Procedure was implemented in a two-channel process in a bid to ensure high response rate and data variety. The primary phase was the spread of a questionnaire survey (digital) on various social networks, including Instagram, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn, capitalizing on the interrelationships of the networks of young adults. The participants were provided with an informed consent form, briefed about the objective of the study, and that their participation is voluntary and the answers they give will remain confidential. After obtaining the electronic consent, the respondents completed the standardized psychometric instruments, including the Doomscrolling Scale, Information Overload and the Avoidant Decision-Making Style Subscale. This online platform used the viability of the online platforms to reach the people of the various geographical locations to minimize the distortion of time and cognitive fog of the entering of the digital data without having to suffer the rigorously anonymous organization of the N=143 cohort.

Another mode of the process was offline collection that added to the triangulation of the outcomes and to alleviate the bias associated with the entirely digital sampling. The identical psychometric instruments were administered in paper and pencil in controlled conditions i.e. in university libraries and work common areas so that physical environment of participants would not impact the internal validity of measures. In order to establish uniformity between the two collection methods, a highly controlled procedure was developed: the participants, both online and offline were provided with the same guidelines and it took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. After the data collection, the answers were manually coded and digitized to analyze them statistically, and one last screen was conducted to retrieve all the incomplete answers or respondents that did not fit the age and news-devouring requirements. This mixed methodology offered a comprehensive perspective of the information overload phenomenon, as it would appear both in its original online domain of the digital environment and in the real world.

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➢ *Ethical Considerations*

The requirement to adhere to ethical considerations was followed in this study to ensure the safety and well-being of all N=143 subjects. All respondents received a comprehensive clarification of the aims of the study and their rights before taking part in the study, and it was done in accordance with the principle of the informed consent. The people were informed that they were fully aware that their involvement in the study was entirely voluntary and that they could exit the study at any time without any interrogation. No personal data such as names, contacts or email address were collected to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. To make sure that the results will not point to particular participants, all the answers were treated as aggregate data. Moreover, secure data storage protocol was established, in which the digital files were encrypted and the physical questionnaires were the prerogative of the primary researcher to ensure that no other party accessed it.

None of the monetary rewards that could have unreasonably influenced the choice to take part was offered to avoid the feeling of being forced and ensure that the information could be the data about the actual, uninfluenced patterns of behavior.

➢ *Data Analysis*

The quantitative data were analysed in JAMOVI (Version 2.7), with some initial data preparation (including item recoding and composite scale calculation) done in Microsoft Excel. All three major variables including the Doomscrolling Scale (DS), the Information Overload Scale (IOS), and the Avoidant Decision-Making Style Subscale of the General Decision-Making Style (GDMS) were calculated using the descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, median, range, and skewness). Before making an inferential analysis, the Shapiro-Wilk test was formally used to determine the normality of all scale scores.

In order to test the correlation of doomscrolling, information overload and avoidant decision-making paralysis, Spearman rank-order correlation (rho) was performed as the non-parametric substitute of the Pearson r. Then, single linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the distinct predictive values of DS scores on IOS scores and DS scores on avoidant DMP scores, and each of the predictors was inputted sequentially using the Enter method. Standardised (β) and non-standardised (B) coefficients, standard errors, t-values, and pvalues were provided and general model fit measures ((R^2, Adjusted R^2). Regression assumptions - such as normality of residuals, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity (measured in VIF and Tolerance statistics) were also tested in a systematic way, and were determined to be satisfactorily met. The statistical significance was tested at each phase at the $\alpha = .05$ level.

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CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS

➢ *Descriptive Statistics*

There were 143 young adults who participated in the study. No data were being lost. The mean rating of doomscrolling was 37.7 (SD = 18.10) and the lowest and highest ratings were 15 and 91 respectively. It was modestly skewed (kurtosis = 0.897) and moderately skewed to the positive (skewness = 0.978). The Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that there is large deviation of normality (W = 0.919, p <.001).

The score of information overload was between 15 and 72 with the average rating of the mean at 45.1 (SD = 12.00). The distribution was roughly mesokurtic (kurtosis = 0.006) and slightly negatively skewed (skewness = −0.521). The Shapiro-Wilk test revealed a substantial deviation from normalcy (W = 0.971, p =.004). (Refer to Table 1)

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics and Normality Test for Doomscrolling, Information Overload and Decision-Making Paralysis (Avoidant)

	Total Doomscrolling Score	**Total IO Score**	**Total DMP Score**
N	143	143	143
Missing	0	0	0
Mean	37.7	45.1	13.9
Median	36	47	14
Standard deviation	18.1	12.0	4.78
Minimum	15	15	5
Maximum	91	72	24
Skewness	0.978	-0.521	0.0130
Std. error skewness	0.203	0.203	0.203
Kurtosis	0.897	0.00679	-0.743
Std. error kurtosis	0.403	0.403	0.403
Shapiro-Wilk W	0.919	0.971	0.975
Shapiro-Wilk p	<.001	.004	.011

For decision-making paralysis (avoidant decision making), the mean score was 13.9 (SD = 4.78), with a range of 5 to 24. The distribution was approximately symmetrical (skewness = 0.013) and slightly platykurtic (kurtosis = −0.743). The Shapiro–Wilk test indicated a statistically significant deviation from normality, W = 0.975, p = .011. (Refer to Table 1)

Given these findings, non-parametric analyses were deemed appropriate for correlation testing.

➢ *Correlation Analyses*

The associations between doomscrolling, information overload, and avoidant decision-making paralysis were investigated using Spearman's rank-order correlations.

Information overload and doomscrolling were found to have a statistically significant moderately positive connection (ρ(141) =.410, p <.001). This suggests that young persons' perceptions of information overload were correlated with higher levels of doomscrolling. (Refer to Table 2)

Similarly, there was a moderately positive correlation (ρ(141) =.442, p <.001) between doomscrolling and decision-making paralysis. According to this research, people who doomscroll more frequently have higher levels of avoidant decision-making tendencies. (Refer to Table 2)

Decision-making paralysis and information overload were found to be strongly positively correlated (ρ(141) =.620, p <.001). Higher levels of perceived information overload are significantly linked to increased decision-making paralysis, as evidenced by the greatest connection among the factors analyzed. (Refer to Table 2)

Table 2 Spearman’s Rho Correlations Between Doomscrolling, Information Overload, and Decision-Making Paralysis

Variable	1	2
1. Doomscrolling		
2. IO Score	.41***	
3. DMP Score	.44***	.62***

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

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26apr1850

➢ *Regression Analyses*

Simple linear regression analysis were performed to investigate predicted correlations in more detail. Doomscrolling was added to the first regression model as a predictor of information overload. The model explained 17.4% of the variance in information overload (R^2 = .174, R^2 Change = R^2 (single step entry), adjusted R^2 = .168) and was statistically significant ($F(1, 141) = 29.63$, $p < .001$). Information overload was substantially predicted by doomscrolling ($t = 5.44$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .417$). These findings suggest that stronger perceptions of information overload are linked to higher doomscrolling scores. (Refer to Table 3)

Table 3 Regression Analysis Summary and coefficients for the prediction of DS and IO

Model	R	R^2	R^2 Change (Stepwise)	Adj R^2	β	t	F	p
	.417	.174	.174	.168	.417	5.44	29.59*	<.001

The second regression model looked at doomscrolling as a predictor of paralysis in decision-making. With $F(1, 141) = 25.00$, $p < .001$, the model was statistically significant and explained 15.1% of the variance in decision-making paralysis (R^2 =.151, R^2 Change = R^2 (single step entry), adjusted R^2 =.145). With $t = 5.00$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .388$, doomscrolling was a significant predictor of decision-making paralysis. According to these results, young adults who engage in more doomscrolling are substantially more likely to make avoidant decisions. (Refer to Table 4)

Table 4 Regression Analysis Summary and coefficients for the prediction of DS and DMP

Model	R	R^2	R^2 Change (Stepwise)	Adj R^2	β	t	F	p
	.388	.151	.151	.145	.388	5.00	25.00*	<.001

Note. N = 143 for both models; Since each has only one predictor, R^2 Change = R^2 (single step entry); F values estimated from t^2: $(5.00)^2 = 25.00$ and $(5.44)^2 \approx 29.59$; β = standardised regression coefficient; *p < .001

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26apr1850

CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION

➢ *Overview*

With a focus on avoidant decision-making tendencies among young individuals, the current study investigated how doomscrolling contributes to information overload and decision-making paralysis. The results showed that decision-making paralysis and information overload were somewhat positively correlated with doomscrolling. Furthermore, there was a clear positive correlation between decision-making paralysis and information overload. Regression analysis also showed that avoidant decision-making and information overload were both highly predicted by doomscrolling. These results offer empirical evidence in favor of the hypothesis that people may become cognitively overwhelmed by excessive exposure to negative news information, which would hinder their ability to make adaptive decisions.

- *Doomscrolling and Information Overload*

The researchers established that there was a moderate positive correlation between doomscrolling and information overload ($r = .410$, $p < .001$). This is very similar with the previous conceptualizations of information overload as a state whereby, the size and complexity of information surpass the processing ability of an individual (Eppler and Mengis, 2004). This imbalance is further enhanced in the digital world where content is continuous, algorithm-based and emotionally salient (Bawden and Robinson, 2009).

The current results are similar to work done in periods of high stress in the world like the COVID-19 pandemic. The study conducted by Gao et al. (2020) revealed that the common exposure to the information about the pandemic on social media was linked to the growing levels of psychological distress. In a similar way, Soraya et al. (2021) found out that the overwhelming exposure to information was an indicator of information overload and anxiety. Although these studies were carried out in the context of crises, their present results indicate that the connection between compulsive negative news consumption and overload can be observed in circumstances other than emergencies. The habitual pattern of doomscrolling, not a reaction to a situation, seems to be able to create sustained feelings of perceptions of an information overload.

It should be noted, though, that quantifying information overload is not the only issue that should be approached critically. According to Edmunds and Morris (2000), overload was also argued to be dependent in an interaction between the volume of information and the ability of a person to filter and organize information in an effective way. This adds a great note: doomscrolling is not necessarily going to overload everybody. Instead, it can overwhelm the individuals of lower cognitive filtering power or emotional sensitivity. Moderating variables, including media literacy, emotional regulation, and cognitive control, were not studied in the present study, and this limits causal accuracy.

Moreover, there have been views by researchers that contemporary digital users are becoming increasingly skilled in large information environment (Tushman and Nadler, 1978). In this view, the amount of information might not be problematic in itself, unless it presents emotional arousal or doubt. The particular aspect of doomscrolling is that it focuses on negative or even threatening information. So, the overload that is exhibited in this paper can be attributed to emotional overload instead of strictly cognitive overload. This differentiation is worth additional empirical studies.

- *Doomscrolling and Avoidant Decision-Making Paralysis*

The researchers found the medium positive relationship existing between the doomscrolling and decisionmaking paralysis ($r = .442$, $p = .001$), and the regression output showed that doomscrolling had a contribution of 15.1 percent to the variance of the avoidant decision-making. It implies that people who use doomscrolling more often can be more prone to delaying, avoiding, or evading decisions.

Scott and Bruce (1995) conceptualized avoidant decision making as being a style that is typified by procrastination, postponement and responsibility avoidance. Avoidance can be construed as a stress coping strategy. In that sense, doomscrolling might increase the sense of uncertainty and danger, thus initiating avoidance as a defense mechanism. This meaning conforms to the information avoidance frame put forward by Sweeny et al. (2010) in which it is believed that individuals occasionally leave decision making processes and control negative affect. It is ironic that doom scrolling can initially be seen as a need to take control by seeking information but ends with cognitive exhaustion and retreat. This contradictory cycle is justified by the current results. According to Baumeister et al. (1998), the theory of ego depletion was put forward to explain that the self-regulatory resources are drained by the continued cognitive effort. Constant exposure to grieving news can demand significant emotional and attentional resources, leaving less resources to organise decisions in a structured manner. Avoidance in this instance turns out to be a low-effort option.

Nevertheless, this conclusion is not supported by the literature unanimously. Gigerenzer and Gaissmaier (2011) proposed that human beings tend to use heuristics to make effective decisions in complex situations. In this respect, greater exposure to information does not invariably lead to paralysis, rather people modify by making choices more simplistic. The contradiction in

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26apr1850

this context can be the nature of doomscrolling itself. Doomscrolling, in contrast to structured information, conveys fragmented emotionally charged information that is difficult to reconcile with other information sources. Such chaotic informational environments may not be effectively handled by heuristics.

- *Information Overload and Decision-Making Paralysis*

Information overload and decision-making paralysis showed the highest correlation in the study (ρ =.620, p <.001). This strong correlation implies that avoidant decision preferences are largely influenced by perceived cognitive strain. Overload, according to Eppler and Mengis (2004), lowers decision quality, raises stress levels, and postpones action. In a similar vein, Jacoby et al. (1974) discovered that too much information decreased the accuracy of customer decisions. These earlier studies provide a mental account of the current findings: decision-making is inefficient when the mental bandwidth is exceeded.

Vohs et al. (2008) were the first to suggest decision fatigue by demonstrating that repetitive decision making impairs cognitive resources and results in avoidance and impulsivity. Bright et al. (2015) found out that weariness and withdrawal behaviors of digital situations were predicted by social media overload. Using a direct relationship between overload and avoidant decision style, the present research contributes to the literature by suggesting that overload can also have an impact on the short- and long-term cognitive tendencies.

Nonetheless, it has some contradictory findings. Although it is true that individuals might deliberately delay judgment in line with Anderson (2003) views, they do not paralyze themselves in order to cope with excessive information. Avoidance may not be dysfunctional as in many cases, it can be simply rational delay. This is a very important interpretive caution: the avoidant style measured by this present study could be either adaptive delay or malicious paralysis. These two kinds require more contextual analysis in order to differentiate them.

➢ *Theoretical Implications*

The findings of the research are beneficial to the contemporary cognitive and behavioural theories, as they place doomscrolling in the role of more than a digital habit, a psychologically pertinent process, which functions with cognitive load, self-management, and decision systems. Based on Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1988), the results reveal that the repetitive exposure to the emotionally evocative and negatively oriented information may saturate the working memory storage with limited resources which can be occupied in the reflection and goal-oriented decision-making. The fact that doomscrolling is a good predictor of information overload, and that overload, in its turn, is a good predictor of avoidant decision-making, is in line with the assumption that once intrinsic and extraneous cognitive loads exceed their tolerable levels, the underperformance will be attained as a result. However, the forecasting ability of doomscrolling in the theory is moderate (rather than overwhelming) which also makes the theory more difficult to a degree. This nuance resonates with Edmunds and Morris (2000) who alleged that perceived control and filtering capacity is the determinant of overload, besides amount of information. Therefore, our findings, although in agreement with cognitive load models, also indicate that the subjective interpretation of online information is at the centre of cognitive saturation to paralysis dishonesty.

The results build on the theories of limited rationality (Simon, 1955) and decision fatigue (Vohs et al., 2008), indicating that with repetition, the confidence in decisions and the preference towards avoidance in situation-related information involving negative frames may diminish gradually. The positive correlation between information overload and avoidant making is consistent with the perspective of Eppler and Mengis (2004) of the fact that overload can decrease the quality of judgment and enhance indecisiveness. Nonetheless, the findings differ with the models that are based on heuristics (Gigerenzer and Gaissmaier, 2011), which suggest that people become accustomed to complexity through simplifying decision-making. Young adults were more avoidant and less adaptively simplified in our sample, potentially because doomscrolling is fragmented and emotionally colored. This implies that information environments which are emotionally intensified and algorithmic information environments may push beyond the boundaries to which heuristics still work, and there is a need to better integrate digital information behaviors into modern decision-making theories.

➢ *Hypotheses Testing*

All four of the suggested hypotheses are well supported by the statistical results. A somewhat positive Spearman's correlation, $\rho(141)$ =.410, p <.001, supported H1, which predicted a strong connection between doomscrolling and information overload. This suggests that young persons' perceptions of information overload were substantially correlated with higher levels of doomscrolling. Similarly, information overload showed a strong positive correlation with avoidant decision-making paralysis ($\rho(141)$ =.620, p <.001), supporting H2. The strength of this link implies that impulses to put off or avoid making decisions also significantly increase when perceptions of cognitive stress rise. H3 was likewise accepted, given the significant moderate positive correlation between doomscrolling and avoidant decision-making, $\rho(141)$ = .442, p < .001. Collectively, these correlational findings indicate that all three core variables are significantly and positively related, with information overload showing the strongest association with decision paralysis.

The regression analysis for H4 further demonstrated that doomscrolling was a significant predictor of avoidant decision-making paralysis and information overload. Doomscrolling strongly predicted information overload (β =.417, p <.001) and

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26apr1850

explained 17.4% of its variance (R^2 =.174, F(1, 141) = 29.63, p <.001). Additionally, it had a significant standardized coefficient (β =.388, p <.001) and explained 15.1% of the variance in avoidant decision-making (R^2 =.151, F(1, 141) = 25.00, p <.001). These results suggest that doomscrolling is a significant statistical predictor of avoidant decision preferences and cognitive stress. Because of the observed significant correlations and regression coefficients, all four hypotheses were empirically supported, and none were rejected.

- *Limitations*

The study is also constrained by the fact that it is cross-sectional, hence limiting the interpretation to causal. Even though the significance of doomscrolling as a predictor of information overload and decision-making paralysis was found to be true, the directionality of the relations could not be affirmed. There is a possibility that those that are more likely to avoid or have cognitive overwhelm doomscroll instead of doomscrolling merely because of its causal effect. Better causality would be explained through longitudinal or experimental studies.

The researcher solely used self-report measures, which can create common method bias and subjective errors (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Perceived information overload can be a manifestation of emotional distress and avoidant decision making is a manifestation of dispositionalism and not of real behavior. Ecological validity would be enhanced with the introduction of behavioral assessments or the ability to track digital use.

The sample was only made of young adults; this restricted the generalization to other age groups. Also, the influence of such variables like anxiety, emotional control, intolerance to uncertainty, and digital literacy was not controlled. These are some of the factors that can be attributed to the high correlation between overload and decision paralysis. These are the possible moderating and mediating effects that need to be studied in the future.

However, doomscrolling was statistically significant and accounted for 17.4% of the information overload variance and 15.1% of the decision-making paralysis variance. This implies that there are other contextual and psychological factors which also lead to such outcomes. The academic stress or uncertainty in life, or even the general environmental factors, might be involved in secondary roles that need to be examined in the future.

- *Future Directions and Practical Recommendations*

Based on these results, longitudinal studies should be prioritized in future research to investigate the hypothesis of whether progressive changes in cognitive overload and avoidance are caused by the sustained use of doomscrolling in the future. The experimental designs could also be used to manipulate exposure to negatively valenced content to see instant effects on the performance of decision-making. These designs would help in determining causality and provide more theory to the observed associations.

Because the correlation between information overload and avoidant decision-making was significant in the current research, future research can also explore the mediation model capable of establishing whether the information overload serves as a psychological mediator through which doomscrolling is a cause of decision paralysis. Furthermore, the works on protective factors, such as digital literacy, cognitive strengths and mindfulness, can come in handy to understand why not everyone becomes paralyzed upon being exposed to an extensive variety of information.

Practically, the findings reveal the need of the digital well-being intervention. Learning institutions and colleges would also be in a position to incorporate courses in mindfulness in media usage, filtering of information, and control of emotions. There is a perceived overload that may be prevented through the encouragement of considered media use, which involves limited news material consumption and the selective use of information sources. On a more macro level, the amplification of negative content with the help of algorithms can be considered by policy makers and the creators of platforms that contribute to cognitive stress. The tendencies of compulsive doomscrolling can be possibly eliminated by content diversity features, usage notifications, or check-in emotions.

In conclusion, it is possible to state that the present research, even though it unveils a significant relation between doomscrolling and cognitive overload, and avoidance-based decision-making, offers some valuable opportunities to develop further research. The psychological price of uncontrolled digital use is increasingly becoming a reality in the globalized world. Further research that involves the use of both theories and practice on the Cognitive, emotional and technological perspectives will be essential in the development of both theory and practice.

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26apr1850

CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSION

The aim of the present research was to find out whether doomscrolling causes a significant effect on the avoidant decision-making paralysis and information overload by young persons. Empirical evidence of this proposed approach is good based on the results. The researchers revealed that doomscrolling was significantly yet weakly correlated with information overload (ρ =.410, p <.001) and avoidant decision-making (ρ =.442, p <.001), in a quantitative cross-sectional study employing a sample of 143 emerging adults. Noteworthy, the positive correlation between information overload and decision-making paralysis was high (ρ =.620, p <.001). This implies that cognitive overwhelm can be one of the main psychological processes that relate avoidance tendencies with excessive exposure to negative news. The regression analysis further supported these findings, indicating doomscrolling significantly predicted avoidant decision-making (R^2=.151) and information overload (R^2=.174), and that all the statistical assumptions were adequately met. On the one hand, these findings indicate that doomscrolling is a behavior that has measurable cognitive and decisional impacts as opposed to a passive digital habit.

Theoretical and practical contributions to the study beyond the statistical significance in putting doomscrolling into the broader contexts of cognitive load, constrained rationality, and decision fatigue are, therefore, made. The implications of the findings are that repeated exposure to information with a high degree of emotional appeal, which is driven by algorithms, can overwhelm cognitive capacity and gradually reduce the level of decisional confidence, with the probability of avoidance instead of adaptive simplicity. Nevertheless, the average effect sizes indicate that doomscrolling is a substantial cause of choice paralysis between the plethora of other elements of the environment and psychology that provoke it. Though the cross-sectional and self-report nature of the study limits a causal interpretation, the study offers a basic direction that digital information practices have on cognitive performance in a hyperconnected society. Ultimately, these findings indicate the value of promoting responsible media consumption and further investigation of the psychological implications of unregulated negative news exposure on young people as they make critical choices in life.

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26apr1850

CHAPTER SEVEN
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