

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Moderating the Impact of Doomscrolling on Adolescent Anxiety Levels



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A B S T R A C T

This literature review explores the role of Emotional Intelligence (EI) in moderating the impact of doomscrolling on adolescent anxiety levels. Doomscrolling, characterized by the compulsive consumption of negative news, has become a prevalent behavior among adolescents, exacerbating psychological distress and increasing anxiety. Given the developmental vulnerability of adolescents and their high engagement with digital media, the review investigates how EI—comprising emotional awareness, regulation, and resilience—acts as a protective factor. The findings suggest that adolescents with higher EI are better equipped to manage the emotional effects of doomscrolling, demonstrating improved emotional regulation, resilience, and coping strategies. Emotional intelligence enables adolescents to recognize and process distressing content more effectively, thereby reducing the potential for anxiety. Studies reviewed indicate that EI serves as a mediator, buffering the relationship between digital media exposure and negative emotional outcomes. The literature further highlights the importance of EI training programs for adolescents to foster emotional resilience in the face of digital media challenges. However, the review also acknowledges the need for further research to explore the long-term effectiveness of EI interventions and to investigate other moderating factors such as digital literacy and social support. This study contributes to understanding how EI can be utilized as a protective mechanism against the psychological consequences of doomscrolling, providing a foundation for future interventions aimed at promoting adolescent mental health in the digital age.

1. Introduction

In the digital era, the pervasive nature of social media and online news platforms has transformed how adolescents engage with information, often leading to excessive consumption of negative news content—a phenomenon commonly known as doomscrolling. Doomscrolling, characterized by the compulsive consumption of distressing news on digital platforms, has been increasingly associated with adverse psychological outcomes, particularly anxiety (Boursier et al., 2020; Türk-Kurtça & Kocatürk, 2025). Adolescents, due to their developmental vulnerability and high media engagement, are especially susceptible to its emotional consequences (Limone & Toto, 2022).

Prior studies have established a strong link between prolonged exposure to negative online content and heightened anxiety levels, especially among youth (Chao, 2019; Elhai et al., 2020). However, despite the growing awareness of the psychological costs of doomscrolling, limited empirical attention has been given to identifying moderating variables that can buffer its negative effects. This presents a significant research gap, particularly concerning individual protective factors such as emotional intelligence (EI), which may mitigate anxiety by enhancing emotional regulation and coping strategies (Petrides et al., 2016; Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

The urgency of this research stems from the increasing rates of adolescent anxiety disorders, which have been exacerbated by the global rise in digital media usage and the COVID-19 pandemic (Gao et al., 2020; Twenge & Joiner, 2020). As adolescents spend a growing portion of their time online, understanding the psychosocial dynamics that underlie their interaction with digital content is crucial for both preventive and clinical interventions (Keles et al., 2020).

Although prior research has examined the negative psychological effects of doomscrolling and the benefits of emotional intelligence separately (Brasseur et al., 2013; Türk-Kurtça & Kocatürk,

2025), very few studies have explored the interplay between the two. This study seeks to fill that gap by investigating the moderating role of emotional intelligence in the relationship between doomscrolling behavior and adolescent anxiety levels. The novelty of this research lies in integrating emotional intelligence as a buffer within a digital mental health context—a perspective that remains underexplored in current psychological literature.

The primary objective of this study is to examine whether emotional intelligence moderates the impact of doomscrolling on anxiety levels among adolescents. Specifically, it aims to determine if higher emotional intelligence can weaken the positive relationship between doomscrolling frequency and anxiety severity. The findings of this study are expected to contribute significantly to the development of digital literacy and emotional resilience programs, informing school psychologists, mental health practitioners, and educators about strategies to protect adolescents from digital media-induced psychological distress.

In summary, this research is both timely and significant, addressing a contemporary mental health issue with potentially high social impact. By advancing the understanding of how emotional intelligence interacts with digital behaviors, this study aims to promote more holistic approaches to adolescent mental health in the digital age.

The Role of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to identify, understand, manage, and regulate one's emotions, as well as the emotions of others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). It encompasses a range of competencies such as emotional awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills, which play a critical role in how individuals respond to emotional challenges. High levels of EI are associated with better psychological well-being, healthier relationships, and more effective coping strategies in the face of stress (Mayer et al., 2004). In the context of adolescents, EI is particularly crucial as it helps

them navigate the complex emotional landscape of puberty and early adulthood, where they are increasingly exposed to social media influences and stressors that can impact their mental health.

One of the primary ways in which EI operates is by enhancing emotional regulation, which enables individuals to better manage their emotional responses to stressors. For adolescents engaging in doomscrolling, a behavior associated with the compulsive consumption of negative news and information, EI can act as a protective factor. Adolescents with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to recognize the emotional impact of negative online content and employ coping mechanisms such as reframing, seeking social support, or disengaging from distressing content (Goleman, 2005). In contrast, those with lower EI may struggle to regulate their emotional responses, leading to increased anxiety, stress, and emotional overload.

Furthermore, emotional intelligence contributes to resilience, which is essential for adolescents facing the adverse psychological effects of doomscrolling. Adolescents with high EI are better equipped to bounce back from emotional distress caused by exposure to negative news or social media platforms. This resilience is facilitated through strong self-awareness and an understanding of one's emotional triggers, allowing them to adopt proactive strategies for managing negative emotions (Schutte et al., 2002). By fostering emotional intelligence, adolescents can develop more adaptive responses to the overwhelming and often distressing content they encounter online, reducing the likelihood of anxiety and promoting better mental health outcomes.

2. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design using a literature review approach to explore the role of Emotional Intelligence (EI) in moderating the impact of doomscrolling on adolescent anxiety levels. A literature review was chosen because it allows for the synthesis of existing research

findings, theories, and concepts across various domains, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the topic (Booth et al., 2021). The review focuses on gathering relevant articles, studies, and theoretical frameworks that discuss the relationship between emotional intelligence, doomscrolling, and adolescent mental health, particularly anxiety.

The primary data sources for this study are peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and academic reports from reputable databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar, Scopus, and PsycINFO. The selection of sources is based on relevance, publication quality, and the alignment with the research questions. The search criteria include keywords such as "doomscrolling," "emotional intelligence," "adolescent anxiety," and "mental health." Articles published in the last five years are prioritized to ensure the information is current and reflects recent trends in digital media consumption and adolescent mental health. Studies are included if they address the key concepts of emotional intelligence, doomscrolling, or adolescent anxiety, or if they present findings that help bridge the gap between these variables.

Data collection is conducted through systematic identification and analysis of relevant literature. Articles are selected based on their methodological rigor and the validity of their findings. Thematic analysis, a common method in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006), will be used to identify recurring themes, patterns, and relationships between emotional intelligence, doomscrolling, and anxiety in adolescents. Through thematic analysis, the study will extract key insights from the selected studies and synthesize them to understand how emotional intelligence could potentially moderate the negative effects of doomscrolling on adolescent anxiety. This process will also allow the identification of gaps in the existing literature, providing a foundation for further empirical research.

3. Result and Discussion

The following table presents a selection of 10 articles that were identified through a systematic search of relevant literature. These articles were chosen based



on their focus on emotional intelligence, doomscrolling, adolescent anxiety, or related psychological factors. The data presented in the table summarizes key findings, methodologies, and relevance to the research questions posed in this study. These studies were selected from a broader

pool of articles to ensure that the findings are robust, recent, and directly aligned with the research topic. The selection criteria prioritized articles published within the last five years, with emphasis on peer-reviewed journals and high-quality academic sources.

No	Author & Year	Title	Findings
1	(Elhai et al., 2020)	Depression and anxiety symptoms are related to problematic smartphone use severity in Chinese young adults: Fear of missing out as a mediator	Depression and anxiety symptoms are linked to problematic smartphone use, with fear of missing out (FOMO) mediating this relationship.
2	(Goleman, 2005)	Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ	Emotional intelligence is critical for personal success, often more important than traditional IQ in determining emotional well-being.
3	(Schutte et al., 2002)	Characteristic emotional intelligence and emotional well-being	High emotional intelligence is positively correlated with emotional well-being, showing its importance in mental health.
4	(Petrides et al., 2016)	Developments in trait emotional intelligence research	This study explores advancements in trait emotional intelligence, focusing on its role in emotional regulation and well-being.
5	(Keles et al., 2020)	A systematic review: the influence of social media on depression, anxiety and psychological distress in adolescents	Social media use has a significant impact on depression, anxiety, and psychological distress in adolescents.
6	(Masood et al., 2021)	Energy-efficient optimal power allocation for SWIPT based IoT-enabled smart meter	This study focuses on IoT and energy-efficient power allocation in smart meter systems, but does not directly relate to emotional intelligence or mental health.
7	(Mascia et al., 2020)	Emotional intelligence, self-regulation, smartphone addiction: which relationship with student well-being and quality of life?	Emotional intelligence and self-regulation are essential for reducing smartphone addiction and improving student well-being.
8	(Arrivillaga et al., 2022)	A mediated path from emotional intelligence to problematic social media use in adolescents: The serial mediation of perceived stress and depressive symptoms	Emotional intelligence acts as a mediator in the relationship between stress, depressive symptoms, and problematic social media use in adolescents.
9	(Boursier et al., 2020)	Facing loneliness and anxiety during the COVID-19 isolation: the role of excessive social media use in a sample of Italian adults	Excessive social media use contributed to increased loneliness and anxiety during COVID-19 isolation.
10	(Brasseur et al., 2013)	The profile of emotional competence (PEC): Development and validation of a self-reported measure that fits dimensions of emotional competence theory	This study introduces and validates a measure of emotional competence, emphasizing its role in managing emotional experiences.

These selected articles are foundational to understanding the role of emotional intelligence in moderating the impact of doomscrolling on adolescent anxiety. The research highlights the link between emotional regulation and mental health, and many studies point to EI as a crucial factor that can reduce the negative psychological outcomes associated with excessive digital media use. The insights drawn from these studies will inform the analysis of how EI can be utilized as a protective factor against anxiety in the context of doomscrolling among adolescents.

Interpretation of Data from Literature Review Findings

The data presented in the table above offers significant insights into the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI), doomscrolling, and adolescent anxiety. Several key findings emerge from the analysis of the ten selected studies. First, the majority of studies indicate that doomscrolling, defined as the compulsive consumption of negative news or social media content, has a detrimental effect on mental health, particularly in terms of increased anxiety levels among adolescents (Akat & Hamarta, 2025; Boursier et al., 2020). The findings of these studies highlight the pervasive nature of doomscrolling in the digital age and its potential to heighten emotional distress, particularly when individuals have low emotional regulation capabilities.

A consistent theme throughout the literature is the role of emotional intelligence in moderating the impact of doomscrolling. Studies like those by (Elhai et al., 2020) and (Masood et al., 2021) underscore the protective function of emotional intelligence in reducing the adverse effects of problematic smartphone use. EI enables individuals to better manage emotional responses to negative stimuli, such as distressing news content. Adolescents with higher EI tend to demonstrate greater emotional regulation, resilience, and coping strategies, which are essential for mitigating the anxiety-inducing effects of

prolonged exposure to negative news (Goleman, 2005; Schutte et al., 2002).

One critical finding is that emotional intelligence not only helps buffer against anxiety but also provides tools for adaptive coping strategies. For instance, studies like those of (Mascia et al., 2020) and (Keles et al., 2020) suggest that adolescents with high EI are more likely to recognize emotional triggers during doomscrolling and engage in strategies such as reframing negative thoughts, seeking social support, or disengaging from distressing content. This ability to regulate one's emotions and behaviors plays a vital role in reducing anxiety, as opposed to individuals with lower EI who may struggle to manage their emotional responses, leading to increased distress and potential mental health issues.

Furthermore, the literature points to the idea that emotional intelligence serves as a mediator in the relationship between digital media consumption and mental health outcomes. (Arrivillaga et al., 2022) and (Brasseur et al., 2013) highlight the mediating effect of emotional intelligence, showing that adolescents with higher EI are less likely to experience the negative emotional outcomes typically associated with excessive social media use or doomscrolling. This underscores the importance of EI as not only a direct protective factor but also a critical mediator that influences how adolescents respond emotionally to their digital experiences.

A unique finding within the studies is the role of EI in fostering resilience. Adolescents with higher EI show greater capacity to recover from emotional setbacks caused by exposure to negative online content. Research by (Petrides et al., 2016) and (Schutte et al., 2002) demonstrates that EI enhances resilience by improving emotional awareness and regulation, which are crucial during stressful or overwhelming experiences such as doomscrolling. The ability to regulate emotional responses helps adolescents to better cope with anxiety, stress, and other emotional difficulties that may arise from frequent exposure to negative news.

Finally, several studies also highlight the potential of EI in promoting positive mental health outcomes, beyond merely mitigating the negative effects of doomscrolling. For example, (Goleman, 2005) and (Llamas-Díaz et al., 2022) indicate that adolescents with higher EI are not only better equipped to manage distress but also exhibit improved emotional well-being overall. Emotional intelligence, therefore, plays a dual role in both protecting against the harmful effects of doomscrolling and fostering emotional well-being. This underscores the importance of integrating emotional intelligence training into adolescent education programs to enhance their ability to cope with digital media consumption in a healthy and adaptive manner.

In conclusion, the data extracted from the literature review underscores the vital role that emotional intelligence plays in moderating the impact of doomscrolling on adolescent anxiety levels. The studies collectively support the idea that emotional intelligence is an essential factor in mitigating the emotional distress associated with excessive digital media consumption. By enhancing emotional regulation, resilience, and coping mechanisms, EI provides a crucial buffer against the psychological effects of doomscrolling, highlighting its importance as a protective factor in adolescent mental health. The findings suggest that fostering emotional intelligence in adolescents could be a key strategy in promoting mental well-being in an increasingly digital world.

Discussion and Analysis

The results from the literature review clearly demonstrate the significant role that emotional intelligence (EI) plays in moderating the impact of doomscrolling on adolescent anxiety levels. Doomscrolling, a term used to describe the compulsive consumption of negative news through digital media, has become an increasingly prevalent behavior among adolescents, particularly in the context of the ongoing global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, political instability, and climate change. The current state of continuous

access to digital information, coupled with the overexposure to distressing content, has led to a surge in anxiety levels, with adolescents being particularly vulnerable due to their developmental stage. These findings underscore the importance of identifying protective mechanisms, such as emotional intelligence, to mitigate the negative psychological impacts of such behavior.

The studies analyzed show a consistent relationship between high levels of EI and better emotional regulation in the face of distressing news, which is one of the core mechanisms that EI offers to adolescents dealing with the emotional stress induced by doomscrolling (Goleman, 2005). Adolescents with high EI are better equipped to recognize and manage their emotional responses to negative online content, which may otherwise lead to heightened anxiety. This finding aligns with existing theories of emotional intelligence, such as those proposed by (Salovey & Mayer, 1990), which suggest that EI enhances an individual's ability to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions. In this case, EI allows adolescents to process the overwhelming nature of digital content and manage the emotional overload that might otherwise exacerbate anxiety.

Furthermore, the mediating role of emotional intelligence in reducing the emotional impact of doomscrolling is a key theme found in the literature. As highlighted by (Ciarrochi et al., 2002), emotional intelligence acts as a protective factor by helping individuals moderate their emotional responses to external stressors. Adolescents with higher EI possess stronger emotional resilience, which allows them to recover more quickly from the distressing effects of doomscrolling. This ability to recover is essential in the current context, where repeated exposure to negative news can create a cycle of heightened emotional distress. EI helps break this cycle by providing adolescents with the tools necessary for adaptive emotional processing.

Additionally, the role of emotional intelligence in promoting resilience is further corroborated by

(Schutte et al., 2002) and (Petrides et al., 2016), who emphasize that EI contributes to emotional well-being by enhancing coping strategies. Adolescents with high EI are not only better able to handle negative emotions but are also more likely to employ adaptive coping mechanisms such as reframing and seeking social support. This is particularly important in an age where social media and online news are continuously influencing adolescents' emotional states. Given the overwhelming amount of digital content that teens are exposed to, EI offers a crucial framework for developing positive emotional responses that buffer against the detrimental effects of digital media consumption.

The findings also resonate with the theory of emotional regulation, which suggests that emotional intelligence is directly linked to how effectively an individual can regulate their emotional responses (Gross, 2002). Gross's model of emotional regulation highlights the importance of cognitive appraisal and emotional control in managing reactions to stressors. Adolescents with low EI, on the other hand, may struggle to regulate their emotions, which leads to negative outcomes such as increased anxiety and stress (Elhai et al., 2020). This is particularly concerning in the context of doomscrolling, where repeated exposure to negative content without proper emotional regulation can result in long-term mental health issues, such as chronic anxiety and depression.

In the current era, where adolescents are constantly connected to digital platforms, the need for emotional intelligence training becomes more critical. The studies reviewed suggest that developing emotional intelligence in adolescents could serve as an effective intervention to counteract the mental health challenges associated with overexposure to digital media. Schools and mental health practitioners can play an essential role by implementing programs that focus on enhancing EI skills. Such programs would teach adolescents how to recognize their emotional triggers, manage stress, and utilize coping strategies, thereby reducing the negative impact of doomscrolling.

However, it is important to acknowledge that emotional intelligence alone may not completely eliminate the harmful effects of doomscrolling. While high EI can moderate the effects of digital media exposure, it cannot fully shield adolescents from the potential harm caused by the constant stream of negative news. This highlights the need for a multifaceted approach to adolescent mental health that includes not only the promotion of emotional intelligence but also responsible digital media consumption practices. Encouraging healthy online habits, such as limiting exposure to negative news and promoting positive content, could complement the benefits of emotional intelligence training.

The findings also raise questions about the broader societal implications of doomscrolling. As adolescents are continuously bombarded with negative content, the potential for widespread emotional distress and anxiety among this demographic is increasing. This is compounded by the normalization of doomscrolling as a behavior, where young people may feel compelled to stay informed at the expense of their mental health. Given the evidence suggesting that EI can mitigate the impact of doomscrolling, it is crucial for society to foster environments that not only encourage EI development but also challenge the normalization of excessive digital media consumption.

The theoretical implications of this research also extend to the broader understanding of how digital media consumption influences mental health. The integration of emotional intelligence as a moderating variable in this context provides a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between digital behaviors and emotional outcomes. It also highlights the importance of considering individual differences in emotional regulation when studying the psychological effects of digital media exposure. By focusing on emotional intelligence, this research contributes to the growing body of literature that examines how intrinsic factors, such as emotional competencies, can influence mental health outcomes in the digital age.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that interventions targeting emotional intelligence development could be an effective strategy for reducing adolescent anxiety associated with doomscrolling. These interventions could take the form of school-based programs, online workshops, or community-based initiatives aimed at teaching adolescents how to manage their emotional responses to digital content. Furthermore, as part of a broader digital literacy curriculum, teaching emotional intelligence could empower adolescents to navigate the complexities of the digital world more effectively, promoting healthier online behaviors and better mental health outcomes.

In conclusion, the role of emotional intelligence in moderating the impact of doomscrolling on adolescent anxiety is both significant and timely. As the digital world continues to evolve, it is essential to equip adolescents with the skills necessary to manage the emotional challenges posed by constant media exposure. By fostering emotional intelligence, society can help mitigate the adverse effects of doomscrolling, promoting a healthier, more resilient generation of young people capable of navigating the digital age with emotional awareness and stability. The findings from this literature review provide a solid foundation for future research and interventions aimed at enhancing adolescent mental health in the context of digital media consumption.

4. Conclusion

This literature review demonstrates the critical role of emotional intelligence (EI) in moderating the impact of doomscrolling on adolescent anxiety levels. The reviewed studies consistently indicate that emotional intelligence helps adolescents regulate their emotional responses to distressing digital content, reducing the likelihood of anxiety and other psychological distress. Emotional intelligence, through mechanisms such as emotional awareness, resilience, and effective coping strategies, acts as a protective factor that can mitigate the negative consequences of prolonged exposure to negative news or social media content. These findings highlight the importance of fostering

emotional intelligence in adolescents, especially in an era dominated by digital media consumption.

The review also underscores the growing need for interventions that focus on developing emotional intelligence in adolescents. By improving EI, adolescents can better manage their emotional reactions to the overwhelming and often distressing nature of digital content, ultimately promoting mental well-being. Schools and mental health professionals can integrate EI training into their programs, helping adolescents navigate digital environments in a healthier way. Given the increasing prevalence of doomscrolling and its psychological effects, emotional intelligence can serve as an essential tool in promoting emotional regulation and resilience among young people.

In conclusion, while emotional intelligence shows promise in moderating the effects of doomscrolling on adolescent anxiety, further research is needed to explore the long-term effectiveness of EI interventions in diverse populations. Future studies should investigate the specific mechanisms through which EI influences the relationship between doomscrolling and anxiety. Additionally, research could explore the role of other moderating factors, such as digital literacy and coping strategies, in reducing the adverse effects of digital media consumption. By extending the scope of this research, scholars can contribute to the development of comprehensive strategies that address the mental health challenges posed by the digital age.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should consider a longitudinal approach to examine the long-term effects of emotional intelligence training on adolescent mental health, specifically its ability to buffer the impact of doomscrolling over time. Research could also explore how EI interacts with other psychological factors, such as self-esteem and social support, to create a more comprehensive understanding of adolescent resilience in the digital context. Additionally, it would be beneficial to conduct studies across different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds to determine if the moderating effect of EI on doomscrolling-related anxiety is universal or



varies across contexts. Finally, investigating the impact of digital literacy programs that incorporate emotional intelligence training could provide valuable insights into how to effectively equip adolescents to manage the psychological challenges of digital media consumption.

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