

DOOM-SCROLLING, RESILIENCE AND EXISTENTIAL ANXIETY AMONG YOUNG ADULTS: EXPLORING GENDER DIFFERENCE

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ABSTRACT

The present research investigates the gender difference between doom-scrolling, resilience and existential anxiety among young adults. A quantitative correlational research design was used. The sample of 341 young adults was selected through a purposive sampling technique. Measures used in the present research were the Doom-Scrolling Scale (DS), Brief Resilience Scale (BRS), and Existential Concerns Questionnaire (ECQ). Collected data was statistically analyzed. Independent-samples t-tests were used to examine at gender differences in doom-scrolling, resilience, and existential anxiety. Compared to women, men reported significantly higher level of doom-scrolling. In resilience there was no gender difference in this sample. Existential anxiety did significantly differ by gender men reported higher existential anxiety then female participants. In general, doom-scrolling and existential anxiety was significantly different in gender.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the twenty-first century, social media has become much more frequent in daily life. It has significantly changed how people interact, communicate, and get information. However, excessive social media use has also been linked to detrimental effects like addiction, anxiety, hopelessness, and decreased productivity. Doom-scrolling, which occurs when people utilize social media while their circumstances worsen and they receive awful news, was one area of worry. Resilience is the capacity to recover from negative experiences. Uncertainty about existence or existential anxiety about life and death (Weems et al., 2025). People have been fighting the Covid-19 pandemic over the past few years, which has presented previously unheard-of difficulties for every person and society on earth. Due to the unpredictable nature of the pandemic, people made an effort to use social media and the internet to learn as much as they could about COVID-19 (Satıcı et al., 2022). People have been spending long hours scrolling through mobile devices for more information and news, most of which are negative, because they were driven to obtain all the facts in order to shield ourselves from danger and to feel in control of it. Continuous exposure to unfavorable material on social media and news feeds may manifest as "doomscrolling," which is often described as a behavior in which users obsessively search for depressing and unfavorable information while scrolling through social media and news site (Jennings, 2020; Watercutter, 2020).

The process by which people express productive adaptability in the face of severe adversity, trauma, or stress was known as resilience. It indicates the capability to heal on an emotional, mental, and social level while maintaining regular growth and functioning (Masten, 2001). The process and outcomes of effectively adjusting to tough or unpleasant life situations, particularly through behavioral, emotional, and mental flexibility and adaptability to both internal and external demands. People's ability to deal with adversity is influenced by a variety of elements, main among them being how they perceive and interact with the world, the number and quality of social resources and certain coping mechanisms. Existential anxiety related to the meaning of life and death, according to the Paul Tillich (1952), existential anxiety evolves three concepts first one was fate and death second concept was emptiness and meaninglessness and the third was condemnation and guilt (Weems et al., 2004). In the words of psychology and philosophy a person's major struggle is to deal with existential anxiety caused on by the terrible awareness of their own death or the risk of non-being. Death fear is normal to a certain level, and many strong individuals manage to deal with death reminders on a regular basis. However, some people may find it difficult to adjust to stressful situations, particularly during periods of high stress. These people may exhibit dysfunctional coping skills or emotional regulation, leading to the development of mental health symptoms (Dursun et al., 2022).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Kaya et al., (2024) of this study was identify the association between death distress, doom-scrolling, self-comparison and resilience among those who affected by earthquakes. There was total 364 Turkish individual who affected by earthquake on February 6, 2023 in Turkiye was part of the study. Finding indicate the doom-scrolling and resilience was mediate the relationship with self-comparison and death distress (Kaya et al., 2024). Research was investigating the relationship between generalized anxiety disorder, psychological resilience, cyberchondria severity, doom-scrolling and social media addiction. The total participates was 553 adults. The measures were used in this study was generalized anxiety disorder scale (GAD7), brief resilience scale (BRS), short –form cyberchondria severity scale (CSS-12), dooscrolling scale (DS), berger social media addiction (BSMA). Results were showed that positive correlation between generalized anxiety disorder and social media addiction, which was largely explained by psychological resilience, doom-scrolling, and cyberchondria (Kurtca, 2025).

This study was investigating relationship between existential anxiety, resilience, anxiety, intolerance of uncertainty, cognitive emotion regulation and outcomes of mental health. This study method ws online survey. Anxiety and depression were significantly predicted by existential anxiety. Intolerance of uncertainty increased the association between existential anxiety and both outcomes, but psychological resilience acted as a buffer. While adaptive cognitive emotion regulation techniques did not affect any of the examined relationships, maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies did moderate the connection between existential anxiety and overall anxiety. Differential impacts were also demonstrated by certain cognitive emotion regulation strategies emphasizing on planning reduced the association between existential anxiety and depression, while catastrophizing increased the relationship for both outcomes (Smrke et al., 2026). This research was aim to identify the relationship between doom-scrolling, learned helplessness and existential anxiety among emerging adults. The research design was used in current study was cross sectional survey total participants in this research was 323. Measures were used in the study doom-scrolling scale, learned helplessness scale and existential anxiety questionnaire. The results emphasize the crucial role that learned helplessness plays as a psychological process that connects existential anxiety with excessive engagement with bad internet content (Zainab & Ahmad, 2025).

Hypothesis

- There is likely to be a significant gender difference between doom-scrolling, resilience and existential anxiety among young adults.

III.METHOD

The current research used a quantitative and correlational research design to investigate the gender difference between doom-scrolling, resilience and existential anxiety among young adults. The comparison of mean scores of male and female participants was conducted by means of an independent sample t -test.

Participants

The study sample was comprised of 341 individuals. There were 171 females and 170 males. Purposive sampling was used. The age of participants ranged 18-30 years. The inclusion criteria were social media users, both male and female adult participants and able to read English and exclusion criteria were an individual with severe psychiatric or cognitive impairments. Throughout the whole research procedure, ethical standards were closely adhered to. All participants gave their informed consent prior to data collection after being fully informed about the study's goal, methods, and voluntary nature. Participants were made aware that participation in the study was completely voluntary and that they might leave at any time without facing any repercussions. By ensuring that their personal information remained anonymous and was not shared with anybody outside the research team, the privacy and confidentiality of each participant were preserved.

Measures

[I] Doom-scrolling Scale (DS). The Doom-scrolling Scale (DS), a 15-item assessment of DS, was developed by Sharma et al., (2022). A 7-point Likert-type scale must be used by participants to indicate how much they 1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree. Doom-scrolling scale Cronbach alpha .92. Example items "I continuously consume negative news online even when it upsets me." "I find it hard to stop scrolling through bad news on social media." assessed with a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 represents "strongly disagree" and 7 represents "strongly agree." High doomscrolling was implied by high scores. Researchers used many parameters to support the scale's validity and reliability. **[II] Brief Resilience Scale (BRS).** Smith et al., (2008) developed Brief Resilience Scale (BRS). The 6-item Brief Resilience Scale (BRS). Brief resilience scale scored on 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree. Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) has the good internal consistency .80–.91. a strong, resilient capacity to overcome challenges or difficult circumstances, recover quickly from stress, and adapt successfully. **[III] Existential Concerns Questionnaire (ECQ).** This measure was developed by Bruggen et al. (2017). It consists of 22 items. The Likert scale is shown here, with items ranging from 1 = Not at all, 2 = Slightly, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a bit, 5 = Extremely. were among the items had acceptable reliability .92. high degrees of psychological distress and existential anxiety. It indicates that the person worries about fundamental human issues like mortality, loneliness, and purpose on a regular and intense basis.

Procedure

The data were gathered on the basis of informed consent of participants. The aim of the research was explained to the participants, and their anonymity was assured. The respondents completed the scale in a comfortable setting after receiving the questionnaire one-on-one. The SPSS was used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics (mean and stand deviation) were calculated to all the variables. The independent sample t-test was used to determine the gender difference on doom-scrolling, resilience and existential anxiety among young adults.

IV.RESULTS

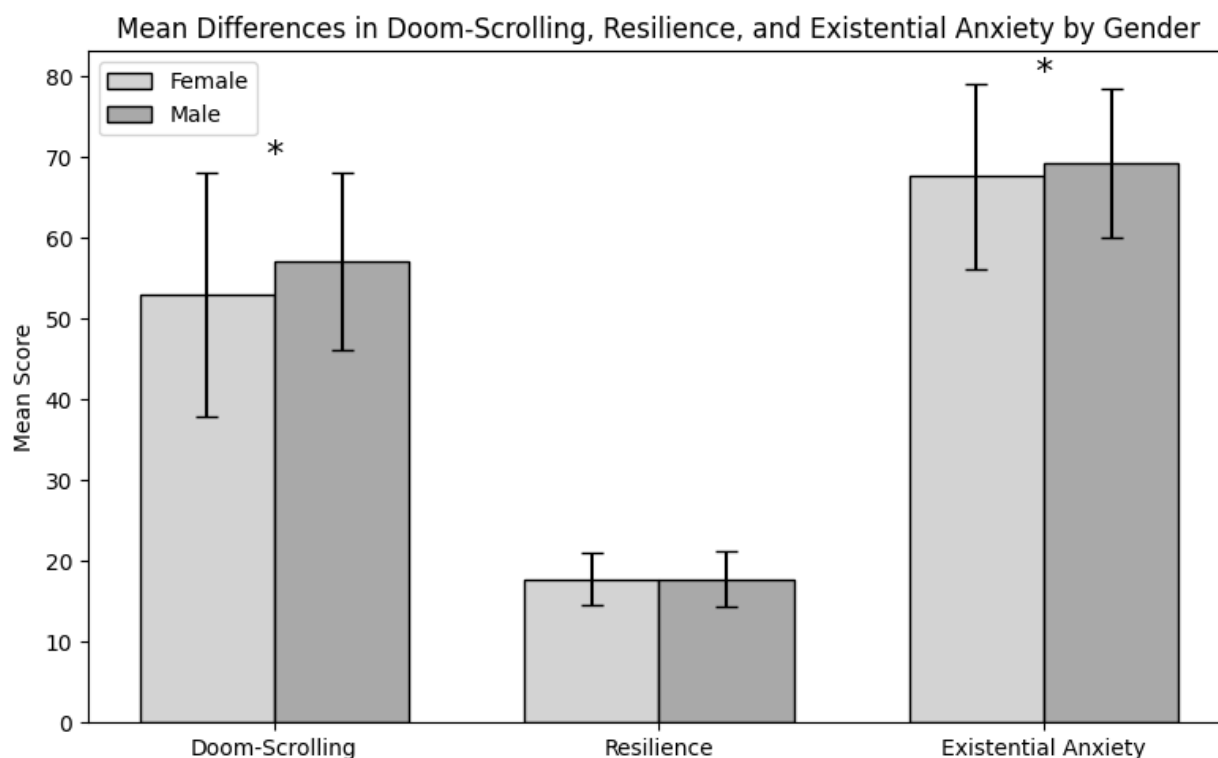
Table I: Mean Comparison of Gender on Doom-scrolling, resilience and Existential anxiety among Young Adults

Variables	Female		Male		t(341)	p	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Doom-scrolling	52.98	15.14	57.12	11.02	2.88	.001	13.25
Resilience	17.79	3.22	17.75	3.45	-.12	.19	3.34
Existential Anxiety	67.63	11.55	69.36	9.20	1.52	.004	10.44

The independent sample t- test was conducted to analyze the gender difference in doom-scrolling, resilience and existential anxiety among young adults. Finding showed that male participants reported significantly higher level of doom-scrolling ($M = 57.12$, $SD = 11.02$) than female participants ($M = 52.98$, $SD = 15.14$), $t(341) = 2.88$, $p = .001$. In contrast, there was no statistically significant difference between females ($M = 17.79$, $SD = 3.22$) and males ($M = 17.75$, $SD = 3.45$) in resilience, $t(341) = -0.12$, $p = .19$. Existential anxiety was reported that male participants significantly higher ($M = 69.36$, $SD = 9.20$) then the female participants ($M = 67.63$, $SD = 11.55$), $t(341) = 1.52$, p

= .004. Finding suggested that there was significantly gender difference in doom-scrolling and existential anxiety among young adults.

Figure 1: Mean Differences in Doom-Scrolling, Resilience, and Existential Anxiety by Gender



The figure displays the mean scores of male and female participants on three variables Doom-Scrolling, Resilience, and Existential Anxiety. Bars represent standard deviations. Significant gender differences were observed for Doom-Scrolling ($p = .001$) and Existential Anxiety ($p = .004$), with male participants scoring higher on both variables. No significant gender difference was found for Resilience ($p = .19$).

V. DISCUSSION

The present study examined gender differences in doom-scrolling, resilience, and existential anxiety among young adults an independent-samples t -test. The findings indicated that male and female participants significantly differed in their levels of doom-scrolling, whereas there was no gender difference in resilience and existential anxiety there was significantly difference in gender. Male participants reported a higher mean level of doom-scrolling ($M = 57.12$, $SD = 11.02$) than female participants ($M = 52.98$, $SD = 15.14$). In contrast, the mean scores for resilience were almost identical for males ($M = 17.75$, $SD = 3.45$) and females ($M = 17.79$, $SD = 3.22$). Similarly, males reported significantly higher existential anxiety ($M = 69.63$, $SD = 9.20$) than females ($M = 67.63$, $SD = 11.55$). Overall, these findings suggest that gender may be more closely associated with patterns of engagement with negative online information, doom-scrolling and existential anxiety. The finding was become particularly relevant in light of the expanding amount of research on doom-scrolling and mental health. In general, "doom-scrolling" refers to the repeated or persistent consumption of unfavorable, frightening, or upsetting content on digital platforms, frequently in spite of the unpleasant psychological effects linked to this practice. Doom-scrolling was linked to anxiety, depression, psychological distress, diminished psychological well-being, and decreased life satisfaction, according to recent meta-analytic data. Nevertheless, the research that was currently available tends to be correlational and does not prove that doom-scrolling directly results in psychological suffering or other unfavorable consequences (Li & Yin, 2026). When considered together, the results show that doom-scrolling and existential anxiety was the most significant gender difference in the current sample. While resilience was not showing gender difference, male reported greater doom-scrolling and existential anxiety scores than female.

These findings imply that gender differences can be more noticeable in certain digital activity patterns and meaning of life and death.

Limitations and Suggestions

When evaluating the results, it is important to take into consideration the limitations of the current study. First, the results may not be as applicable to other age groups because the sample was limited to young adults. Second, it is impossible to establish causal correlations between doom-scrolling resilience and existential anxiety due to the study's cross-sectional design. Third, the information was obtained from self-report measures, which could have been impacted by participants' memories, social desirability, or personal opinions. Larger and more varied samples should be used in future research to increase the findings generalizability. To better understand the relationships between doom-scrolling, resilience and existential anxiety, longitudinal study could be done. Researchers can also think about looking at things like social media usage habits, exposure to bad news, sleep quality, and mental health.

Implications

The current study conclusions have a number of implications for understanding young individual's use of digital media. Given that male participants reported higher levels of doom-scrolling, gender-related patterns of involvement with negative internet content should be taken into consideration. Promoting resilience and appropriate coping mechanisms may help young adults deal with upsetting internet content more skillfully, even though resilience and existential anxiety did not exhibit significant gender differences. Instructors and mental health specialists can help people adopt healthy social media habits, restrict their exposure to harmful content, and use technology with awareness. Programs to raise awareness about the possible psychological consequences of excessive doom-scrolling may also be offered by universities and counseling agencies. Overall, the results emphasize how crucial it is to take digital media behavior into account when addressing psychological wellbeing.

VI.CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the current study examined how young individuals doom-scrolling, resilience and existential anxiety varied by gender. The results demonstrated a gender difference in the consumption of unpleasant internet content, with male participants reporting significantly higher levels of doom-scrolling than female participants. Males and females, on the other hand, had nearly comparable resilience scores, and the difference was not statistically significant. In a similar, men reported significantly higher levels of existential anxiety than women, although this difference was statistically significant. Overall, the results indicate that doom-scrolling behavior and existential anxiety was more indicative of gender differences than resilience. These findings emphasize how crucial it is to look at digital media usage patterns in order to comprehend the psychological experiences of young adults. However, the results do not prove that doom-scrolling actually contributes to psychological discomfort or anxiety. Overall, in this sample, gender may be more strongly linked to online information consumption behaviors and the meaning of life and death, doom-scrolling and existential anxiety than the resilience.

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