

**Doomscrolling Among the Polish Population: Validity of Measurement and
Relationships with Social Media Addiction, War Anxiety, and Persistent Thinking
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About War

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Abstract

Doomscrolling, defined as the compulsive consumption of negative online information, has been increasingly linked to poorer mental health and heightened anxiety in contexts of societal threat. The present research had two main aims: (1) to evaluate the psychometric properties of the Polish adaptation of the Doomscrolling Scale (DSS) and (2) to examine the mediating role of doomscrolling in the relationship between social media addiction and war-related anxiety and persistent thinking about war. Two cross-sectional studies were conducted among Polish adults (Study 1: $N = 530$; Study 2: $N = 529$). In Study 1, confirmatory factor analysis supported the one-factor structure of both the full 15-item DSS and its short 4-item version. The scales demonstrated high internal consistency and satisfactory convergent validity through positive associations with social media addiction, fear of missing out, escapism, and psychological distress, as well as discriminant validity through weaker relations with well-being and life satisfaction. In Study 2, structural equation modeling indicated that doomscrolling fully mediated the relationships between social media addiction and both anxiety of war and persistent thinking about war. Overall, the findings confirm that doomscrolling is a coherent and measurable construct linked to maladaptive patterns of media use and emotional responses to threat-related content. The validated Polish versions of the DSS may be used in research and applied settings to assess risk associated with excessive exposure to negative information and to inform preventive and psychoeducational interventions aimed at promoting healthier media consumption.

Keywords: doomscrolling, validation, social media addiction, war anxiety, war persistent thinking

Introduction

Access to the internet, online services, and social media enables the creation and consumption of information on a global scale (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The attention economy means that negative information is remembered more quickly and evokes stronger emotional reactions, which, from an evolutionary perspective, stems from individuals' engagement in monitoring and controlling potential threats (Nelson-Field, 2020). As a result, armed conflicts or climate-related disasters (Özmen, 2025), by generating uncertainty and intense emotions, become topics that capture the attention and interest of users logged in online who seek information on selected issues. Consequently, individuals may spend more time using mobile devices, checking and verifying information across various websites and social media platforms. This phenomenon intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was undoubtedly an unprecedented situation over the past 20 years, when people confined to their homes began to allocate time typically devoted to daily activities to browsing platforms and social networks in search of new information about the virus and the pandemic (Mannell & Meese, 2022; Price et al., 2022; Ytre-Arne & Moe, 2021). This compulsive consumption of content, together with growing scholarly interest, came to be known as *doomscrolling* (or *doomsurfing*). The term derives from the English words *doom*, meaning catastrophe or misfortune, and *scrolling*, referring to screen scrolling, and denotes "habitual, immersive scanning of current negative information on social media" (Sharma et al., 2022), which takes the form of a negative cycle characterized by being trapped in the pursuit of negative emotions (Güme, 2024; Satici et al., 2023; Sharma et al., 2022; Soraci et al., 2025). It is also worth noting that social media and online service algorithms are designed to learn from users' browsing behavior and subsequently present content of similar topics and significance, which can substantially facilitate the development of a habit of compulsive consumption of negative information (Satici et al., 2022; Sharma et al., 2022; Soraci et al., 2025). Moreover,

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doomscrolling appears to be particularly prevalent among social media users and young people (Akat & Hamarta, 2025; Usman et al., 2025).

Doomscrolling, Social Media, and Mental Health

Given the theoretical framework of doomscrolling, existing research most often links it to various indicators of poorer mental health and well-being (Taskin et al., 2024). For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, increased exposure to pandemic-related social media—often described as doomscrolling—was associated with higher levels of depression and PTSD symptoms. These effects were particularly pronounced among individuals with pre-existing psychological vulnerabilities, suggesting that compulsive consumption of negative crisis-related content may exacerbate mental health difficulties during periods of collective threat. Findings indicate that higher levels of doomscrolling correlate with stronger psychological risk factors, such as fear of missing out (Rajan et al., 2026), social media addiction (Akat & Hamarta, 2025), as well as lower life satisfaction and reduced psychological well-being, suggesting its negative consequences for mental health and quality of life (Satici et al., 2023). Moreover, data from several studies point to a significant negative impact of doomscrolling on mental health, with intensive doomscrolling being associated with increased stress, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and a decline in overall well-being and psychological health (Kaya & Griffiths, 2025; Sharma et al., 2022). Additionally, cross-cultural studies have shown that problematic scrolling of negative content may contribute to heightened existential anxiety and pessimistic worldviews, which in themselves constitute risk factors for mental disorders (Shabahang et al., 2024).

Doomscrolling Scale and Local Validation

Sharma et al. (2022) developed the Doomscrolling Scale (DSS-15) in response to growing interest in compulsive consumption of negative content. The instrument is grounded in broad theoretical frameworks that account for the interaction of cognitive processes,

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emotion regulation, and behavioral reinforcement mechanisms (better to insert a recent citation). The scale consists of 15 items and represents a single-factor construct understood as a maladaptive pattern of prolonged engagement with negative content available online. The total score across all items reflects an individual's propensity to engage with negative informational content (Yang et al., 2024; Sharma et al., 2022). In addition to the version consisting of 15 statements, the authors also proposed a shortened version consisting of four statements (1, 2, 10, 12) while maintaining a single-factor structure (DSS-4) (Sharma et al., 2022). DSS-4, like DSS-15, had good psychometric indicators, which was also confirmed in local validations. The scale development followed a traditional and methodologically sound procedure. First, a literature review was conducted to define the construct of doomscrolling and to identify its key theoretical components. The next important stage involved developing an item pool reflecting the behavioral and emotional aspects of the phenomenon, which was then evaluated by experts in terms of content validity and clarity of wording. Subsequently, a pilot study was carried out using exploratory factor analysis to identify the scale's structure and select the best-performing items. The final structure of the instrument was verified through confirmatory factor analysis on an independent sample. In parallel, the internal consistency of the scale as well as its convergent and discriminant validity were assessed by examining relationships with other psychological constructs (Sharma et al., 2022). The original scale has also been adapted into other languages, including Turkish (Satici et al., 2023), Italian (Soraci et al., 2025), and Chinese (Yang et al., 2024). All these adapted versions have demonstrated good psychometric properties for both the full and short forms.

Current Study

Although doomscrolling has increasingly been discussed within the fields of media psychology and mental health, empirical research on this phenomenon remains limited (Kaya & Griffiths, 2025; Satici et al., 2023; Taskin et al., 2024). One reason for this scarcity may be

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the complex and subjective nature of doomscrolling, which combines elements of compulsive media use, emotion regulation, and exposure to threatening content (Rodrigues, 2022).

Moreover, according to the existing literature, compulsive content consumption is often conceptualized as habitual, immersive “scanning” of news in search of negative information on social media and news feeds. This behavior is frequently motivated by a need for control in situations of uncertainty, yet in practice it leads to a vicious cycle of deteriorating well-being (Satici et al., 2023).

Empirical studies indicate that doomscrolling is associated with elevated levels of anxiety (including existential anxiety) and pessimistic beliefs, suggesting that prolonged consumption of negative news may contribute to increased concerns about the future and personal safety (Shabahang et al., 2024). In the context of war, it is particularly important that the negatively perceived impact of media consumption during the war in Ukraine (in a study conducted in Poland in 2022) (Babicki et al., 2022), was linked to higher levels of anxiety and distress, as well as lower psychological resilience. Similar dynamics have also been observed following concrete security-related incidents in Poland in 2025, such as reported violations of national airspace by drones, which were accompanied by a rapid increase in online information seeking and disinformation activity (Czarnecka, 2025). In this context, information operations associated with the war in Ukraine—including the systematic use of high-volume, contradictory messaging aimed at generating cognitive chaos and undermining trust—create conditions that intensify fear-based and repetitive engagement with negative content, while simultaneously prompting the development of digital defensive strategies such as prebunking (Helmus & Holynska, 2024). This finding strengthens the argument that the *mode* of being online (rather than mere frequency of exposure to information) may have clinical and preventive significance (Malecki et al., 2023; Chudzicka-Czupala et al., 2023). Furthermore, research on psychological reactions to the war in Ukraine across different

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populations points to elevated levels of anxiety and post-traumatic stress symptoms among individuals who follow war-related events. This creates a context in which doomscrolling may function as a factor that maintains or exacerbates anxiety (Chudzicka-Czupala et al., 2023). This is particularly relevant in Poland as a direct neighbour of Ukraine, where geographical proximity, large-scale involvement in refugee assistance, and fears of conflict escalation intensify perceived threat even in the absence of direct exposure to warfare (Surzykiewicz et al., 2022). From a cognitive perspective, doomscrolling may represent a threat-focused mode of information processing in which repeated exposure to negatively valenced war-related content activates maladaptive schemas and cognitive biases, such as selective attention to danger and catastrophic interpretation (Beck, 1976; Beck & Clark, 1997). Within this framework, addictive patterns of social media use may increase vulnerability to such processing modes, while doomscrolling functions as a proximal mechanism that translates excessive media engagement into heightened anxiety of war and war-persistent thinking.

Based on the above considerations, two studies were conducted. The first study aimed to evaluate the psychometric properties of the Polish adaptation of the Doomscrolling Scale (DSS), including its factorial structure as well as its validity and reliability. The following research hypotheses were formulated:

H1. DSS-15 will be positively and moderately to strongly correlated with measures of psychological distress, fear of missing out, social media addiction, and escapism, thereby supporting its convergent validity.

H2. DSS-15 will be weakly to moderately and negatively correlated with measures of life satisfaction and well-being, thereby supporting its discriminant validity.

H3. Correlation coefficients reflecting the discriminant validity of the Doomscrolling scale (15 items) will be significantly lower than those reflecting its convergent validity.

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The second study focused on examining the mediating role of doomscrolling in the relationship between social media addiction and anxiety and fear related to war. Based on existing empirical findings indicating associations between media addiction, doomscrolling, and the severity of anxiety symptoms and existential concerns, it was assumed that doomscrolling may function as a mediating mechanism in the relationship between problematic media use and emotional reactions to war-related threats (Shabahang et al., 2024; Malecki et al., 2023). Accordingly, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H4: Doomscrolling mediates the positive relationship between social media addiction and anxiety of war.

H5: Doomscrolling mediates the positive relationship between social media addiction and persistent thinking of war.

Materials and Method

Participants

Study 1

A total of 530 individuals participated in the study, aged between 18 and 71 ($M = 24.44$; $SD = 8.45$). Females constituted 76.2% of the sample ($n = 404$), while males accounted for 23.8% ($n = 126$). Regarding place of residence, 24.5% of participants ($n = 130$) lived in rural areas, 22.3% ($n = 118$) lived in cities with up to 100,000 inhabitants, 17.2% ($n = 91$) lived in cities with 100,000 to 250,000 inhabitants, 12.6% ($n = 67$) lived in cities with 250,000 to 500,000 inhabitants, and 23.4% ($n = 124$) lived in cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants.

In terms of education, 0.4% of participants ($n = 2$) had lower secondary education, 2.8% ($n = 15$) reported vocational education, 62.6% ($n = 332$) had secondary education, and 34.2% ($n = 181$) had higher education. Regarding marital status, 48.7% of participants ($n = 258$) reported being single, 39.1% ($n = 207$) were in an informal relationship, 11.3% ($n = 60$)

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reported being in a formal relationship, and 0.9% ($n = 5$) reported being divorced. With respect to employment status, 47.4% of participants ($n = 251$) reported being students, 35.1% ($n = 186$) combined studying with work, 1.1% ($n = 6$) worked occasionally, 12.6% ($n = 67$) were employed full-time, 2.6% ($n = 14$) were unemployed, and 1.1% ($n = 6$) were retired or receiving a disability pension. Regarding daily time spent on social media, 2.6% of participants ($n = 14$) reported using social media for less than one hour per day, 7.2% ($n = 38$) reported one hour per day, 20.8% ($n = 110$) reported two hours per day, 26.0% ($n = 138$) reported three hours per day, 21.1% ($n = 112$) reported four hours per day, and 22.3% ($n = 118$) reported five hours or more per day.

Study 2

A total of 529 individuals participated in the second study, aged between 18 and 68 ($M = 24.29$; $SD = 7.78$). Females constituted 76.6% of the sample ($n = 405$), while males accounted for 23.4% ($n = 124$). Regarding place of residence, 31.4% of participants ($n = 166$) lived in rural areas, 24.4% ($n = 129$) lived in cities with up to 100,000 inhabitants, 11.7% ($n = 62$) lived in cities with 100,000 to 250,000 inhabitants, 13.0% ($n = 69$) lived in cities with 250,000 to 500,000 inhabitants, and 19.5% ($n = 103$) lived in cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants. In terms of education, 0.8% of participants ($n = 4$) had primary education, 0.2% ($n = 1$) had lower secondary education, 1.1% ($n = 6$) reported vocational education, 64.5% ($n = 341$) had secondary education, and 33.5% ($n = 177$) had higher education. Regarding marital status, 55.0% of participants ($n = 291$) reported being single, 32.5% ($n = 172$) were in an informal relationship, 10.8% ($n = 57$) reported being in a formal relationship, 1.5% ($n = 8$) reported being divorced, and 0.2% ($n = 1$) reported being widowed. With respect to employment status, 49.7% of participants ($n = 263$) reported being students, 34.0% ($n = 180$) combined studying with work, 13.2% ($n = 70$) worked occasionally, 0.4% ($n = 2$) were employed full-time, 1.9% ($n = 10$) were unemployed, and 0.8% ($n = 4$) were retired or

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receiving a disability pension. Regarding average daily time spent on social media, analyses included data from 522 participants. Of these, 6.1% ($n = 32$) reported using social media for one hour per day, 19.9% ($n = 104$) reported two hours per day, 26.6% ($n = 139$) reported three hours per day, 25.1% ($n = 131$) reported four hours per day, and 22.2% ($n = 116$) reported five hours per day. Missing data were observed for seven participants (1.3% of the sample). In terms of the number of social media friends, 19.5% of participants ($n = 103$) reported having up to 50 friends, 30.8% ($n = 163$) reported having 50–150 friends, 21.2% ($n = 112$) reported having 150–250 friends, 14.2% ($n = 75$) reported having 250–500 friends, and 14.4% ($n = 76$) reported having more than 500 friends.

Procedure

The procedure of the first study began with the translation and cultural adaptation of the Doomscrolling Scale. The adaptation process was conducted in accordance with the classical guidelines for the adaptation of psychological tests described by Hornowska and Paluchowski (2004). This procedure aimed to ensure linguistic, semantic, and functional equivalence of the instrument while maintaining consistency with the theoretical meaning of the original construct.

In the first stage, the original version of the scale was independently translated into Polish by two translators fluent in English and possessing a background in psychology. Based on both independent translations, a single preliminary version of the scale was developed. Differences between the proposed translations were analyzed in terms of clarity, linguistic naturalness, and consistency with the theoretical content of the items. In cases of discrepancies, formulations that best reflected the intent of the original items and were appropriate to the Polish cultural context were selected.

Next, the preliminary version underwent a back-translation into English by an independent translator who was unfamiliar with the original version of the scale. The aim of

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this stage was to verify the semantic equivalence of the items and to identify potential semantic shifts, in line with classical standards for psychometric adaptation (Hornowska & Paluchowski, 2004). Comparison of the original version and the back-translated version revealed no significant discrepancies in terms of item meaning or construct interpretation.

The subsequent stage involved an expert content evaluation of the items to verify their cultural adequacy and compatibility with the realities of digital media use in Poland. The analysis focused on whether the items were understandable, unambiguous, and free from culturally foreign or socially inappropriate expressions (Hornowska & Paluchowski, 2004).

The finalized scale was then included in a set of instruments administered through an anonymous Google Forms questionnaire. Participant recruitment was conducted via social media platforms and online thematic groups. Participation in the study was voluntary and unpaid. Prior to participation, all respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, its anonymity, and their right to withdraw at any stage without any consequences. Providing informed consent was a prerequisite for participation.

After giving consent, participants completed a set of self-report questionnaires. In the first part, sociodemographic data were collected, including sex, age, education, place of residence, and employment status. Subsequently, participants completed the Doomscrolling Scale, followed by the remaining questionnaires. The order of questionnaire presentation was identical for all participants.

The validation study was implemented in November, and the correlation study in December 2025. The procedure of the second study was analogous to that of the first study, with the exception that it did not include the stages related to cultural adaptation. Both studies were conducted in accordance with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. The research procedures were positively reviewed by the Scientific Research Ethics Committee of the University of Economics and Human Sciences in Poland (Approval No. 15/2025).

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The average time required to complete the survey was approximately 10-15 minutes. Data was automatically stored in a database and contained no information enabling participant identification.

Measures

Study 1

Doomscrolling. Doomscrolling was measured using the Doomscrolling Scale (DSS) developed by Sharma et al. (2022), with $\alpha = .96$, consisting of 15 items describing a tendency to compulsively search for and consume negative information on social media. The items refer to both behavioral aspects (e.g., frequent checking of negative news) and emotional aspects (e.g., tension, anxiety, and difficulty disengaging from exposure to negative content). Responses are provided using response options ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*.) Higher scores indicate greater intensity of doomscrolling.

In the present study, both the full version of the scale (DSS-15) and its shortened version (DSS-4), proposed by Sharma et al. (2022), were analyzed. The DSS-4 consists of four items (Items 1, 2, 10, and 12) extracted from the full scale.

Social Media Addiction. Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS), developed by Andreassen et al. (2016), $\alpha = .88$, and adapted into Polish by Balcerowska et al. (2022), $\alpha = .77$, was used to assess problematic social media use. The scale consists of six items referring to the core components of behavioral addiction, including salience, tolerance, mood modification, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse. Responses are provided using response options ranging from 1 (*very rarely*) to 5 (*very often*). The reliability coefficient of the scale in the present study was $\alpha = .81$.

Fear of Missing Out. The Fear of Missing Out Scale (FOMO), developed by Przybylski et al. (2013), with an original reliability of $\alpha = .90$ and a Polish adaptation by Jupowicz-Ginalska et al. (2013); $\alpha = .89$, was used to assess fear of missing out. The scale

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measures the tendency to experience anxiety related to the belief that others may be having rewarding experiences from which the individual is absent. The instrument consists of 10 statements. Responses are provided using response options ranging from 1 (*generally not true*) to 5 (*completely true*). The reliability coefficient of the scale in the present study was $\alpha = .79$.

Escapism. The Escapism Scale, originally developed by Hirschman (1983), modified by Wu and Holsapple (2014) and Gao et al. (2017), and translated into Polish by Uram and Skalski-Bednarz (2024), $\alpha = .91$, was used to assess escapism, understood as a tendency to avoid difficult emotions or problems by engaging in media-related activities. The scale consists of four statements. Responses are provided using response options ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores reflect a stronger tendency to use media as a means of escaping from reality. The reliability coefficient of the scale in the present study was $\alpha = .89$.

Depression. The Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS-21) developed by Lovibond & Lovibond (1995), consisting of three subscales—depression ($\alpha = .91$), anxiety ($\alpha = .84$), and stress ($\alpha = .90$) were used to measure symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress. The Polish adaptation by Makara-Studzińska et al. (2022) demonstrated high overall reliability ($\alpha = .93$). The instrument includes 21 items. Responses are provided using response options ranging from 0 (*did not apply to me at all*) to 3 (*applied to me very much or most of the time*). Higher subscale scores indicate greater severity of the respective symptoms. The reliability coefficients of the subscales in the present study were depression $\alpha = .89$, anxiety $\alpha = .84$, and stress $\alpha = .85$.

Well-Being. The Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS), developed by Tennant et al. (2007), with an original reliability of $\alpha = .91$ and a Polish version developed by Niesiołbędzka et al. (2024), $\alpha = .84$, was used to measure mental well-being.

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The shortened Polish version of the scale consists of seven items referring to positive psychological functioning, such as optimism, perceived usefulness, and clarity of thinking. Higher scores indicate a higher level of mental well-being. The reliability coefficient of the scale in the present study was $\alpha = .80$.

Satisfaction with Life. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), developed by Diener et al. (1985), $\alpha = .87$ in the Polish adaptation by Juczyński (2009), $\alpha = .81$, was used to assess life satisfaction. The scale consists of five items measuring the cognitive evaluation of one's life as a whole. Responses are provided using response options ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores indicate greater life satisfaction. The reliability coefficient of the scale in the present study was $\alpha = .86$.

Demographic Characteristics. A demographic questionnaire was also administered, containing questions about age, gender, place of residence, marital status, employment status, and the average number of friends on social media platforms.

Study 2

Doomscrolling. In the second study, doomscrolling was measured using the Doomscrolling Scale (DSS; Sharma et al., 2022), validated in Study 1. The reliability coefficient of the scale in the present study was $\alpha = .93$.

Social Media Addiction. The Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS; Andreassen et al., 2016), in the Polish adaptation by Balcerowska et al. (2022), was used to assess problematic social media use. The reliability coefficient of the scale in the present study was $\alpha = .79$.

War Anxiety. The War Anxiety Scale (WAS), in the Polish adaptation by Surzykiewicz et al. (2022); $\alpha = .87$, was used to measure the severity of anxiety related to the experience of war. The scale consists of seven items describing common symptoms of anxiety disorders consistent with DSM-5 diagnostic criteria, such as dizziness, sleep

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problems, subjectively experienced distress, loss of appetite, nausea, fatigue, and shortness of breath. The scale was developed based on the Coronavirus Anxiety Scale model, with all items adapted to the war context. Respondents rate the frequency of the listed symptoms over the past two weeks using response options ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*daily or almost daily*.) The internal consistency of the scale in the present study was $\alpha = .87$.

War Persistent Thinking. The War Persistent Thinking Scale (WPTS), in the Polish adaptation by Surzykiewicz et al. (2022); $\alpha = .93$, was used to assess negative, persistent thinking related to war. The scale consists of seven items referring to the frequency of engaging in intrusive and difficult-to-control war-related thought processes over the past two weeks. The items were developed based on the literature on the psychology of anxiety and fear and were modeled on the structure of the Obsession with COVID-19 Scale, adapted to the realities of war experiences. Responses are provided using response options ranging analogous to that used in the WAS. The internal consistency of the scale in the present study was $\alpha = .93$. Additionally, a demographic questionnaire identical to that used in Study 1 was also administered.

Data Analysis

Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 29.0.2.0 and the R environment (R Core Team, 2025), with the use of the lavaan (Rosseel, 2012), semTools (Jorgensen et al., 2022) and psych (Revelle, 2023) packages. The main objectives of the analyses were to evaluate the factor structure (using confirmatory factor analysis, CFA), validity and reliability of the Doomscrolling Scale, as well as to compare the full and abbreviated versions of the instrument. To test the study's mediation hypotheses (study 2), we conducted SEM using the “lavaan” package in R (Rosseel, 2012), applying a 95% confidence interval (CI) for standard errors (bootstrap = 5000; Preacher & Hayes, 2004), using the same

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estimator used for CFA (i.e., WLSMV). In addition, we tested an alternative model, given the correlational nature of the study.

Data Characteristics and Preliminary Preparation

Items of the Doomscrolling Scale were assessed using a 7-point Likert response format. Tests of univariate normality (Shapiro-Wilk) indicated significant departures from normality for the majority of items ($p < .05$). Examination of skewness and kurtosis values further supported this conclusion, with several items exceeding commonly recommended thresholds ($|\text{skewness}| > 1$; $|\text{kurtosis}| > 1$). Descriptive statistics for all items are presented in Table 1, and full distributional information is provided in Appendix A. Missing data were minimal ($< 5\%$) and did not require imputation (Baraldi & Enders, 2010).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The factor structure of the Doomscrolling Scale was examined using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Models were estimated using the WLSMV (Weighted Least Squares Mean and Variance adjusted) estimator, which is recommended for ordinal variables and does not assume multivariate normality (Brown, 2015; Li, 2016). This estimator is based on polychoric correlation matrices, allowing for more accurate modeling of relationships between Likert-type items than classical maximum likelihood estimation.

Model fit was evaluated using a set of complementary fit indices, in accordance with the recommendations of Hu and Bentler (1999) and Brown (2015). Incremental fit indices (CFI, TLI), absolute fit indices (SRMR), and approximation error indices (RMSEA with a 90% confidence interval) were reported. The following interpretative criteria were adopted: CFI, TLI values $\geq .90$ indicated good fit, and $\geq .95$ indicated very good fit; RMSEA values $\leq .08$ were considered acceptable, and $\leq .06$ were considered good; SRMR values $\leq .08$ indicated good model fit.

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Additionally, the Parsimony Normed Fit Index (PNFI) was reported, as it accounts for model parsimony and is particularly useful when comparing models with different numbers of parameters (Mulaik et al., 1989). It should be noted, however, that PNFI is sensitive to the number of degrees of freedom and may yield lower values in very short scales regardless of overall model fit quality.

Convergent and Discriminant Validity

Convergent and discriminant validity were assessed by examining Pearson correlations between the Doomscrolling Scale and related psychological constructs. Convergent validity was supported by significant associations with theoretically related variables, whereas discriminant validity was indicated by weaker correlations with constructs expected to be unrelated or only marginally related.

Discriminant validity was further evaluated using the heterotrait–monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT; Henseler et al., 2015) as well as the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), computed from standardized factor loadings obtained in confirmatory factor analyses. HTMT values were calculated between scale scores and interpreted in accordance with recommended guidelines (Cheung et al., 2024): values below .85 were taken to indicate satisfactory discriminant validity, whereas values between .85 and .90 were considered acceptable but potentially suggestive of overlap between constructs. All HTMT values observed in the present study remained below the conservative threshold of .85, supporting the distinctiveness of the measured constructs. AVE values greater than .50 were interpreted as indicating adequate convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Internal Consistency

Scale reliability was assessed using multiple coefficients to avoid the limitations of relying on a single measure. Cronbach's alpha was calculated (Zumbo et al., 2007) the same as McDonald's omega coefficients (ω) were estimated, as they are recommended as more

accurate indicators of reliability in unidimensional models because they do not assume tau-equivalence of items (Deng & Chan, 2017; Dunn et al., 2014).

Results

Study 1

Factor Structure of the Full Version of the Scale (DSS-15)

A one-factor model of the Doomscrolling Scale comprising 15 items was tested using confirmatory factor analysis. The model demonstrated very good fit to the data: χ^2 (90) = 221.57; CFI = .996, TLI = .996, RMSEA = .053, SRMR = .052, supporting the assumption of the unidimensionality of the doomscrolling construct (see Table 1).

Table 1

Confirmatory Factor Analysis Fit Indices for the One-Factor DSS-15 Model and the Shortened DSS-4 Model

Model	χ^2	df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	90% CI RMSEA	SRMR
DSS-15 (one-factor)	221.57	90	.996	.996	.053	[.044, .061]	.052
DSS-4 (one-factor)	32.03	2	.991	.974	.168	[.120, .222]	.065

Note. χ^2 = Chi square; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; TLI = Tucker–Lewis Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; CI = Confidence Interval; SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual. Estimation was conducted using WLSMV with ordinal indicators.

All items loaded significantly onto the latent factor ($p < .001$), with standardized factor loadings ranging from .71 to .93. These values indicate that each item is a strong indicator of the measured construct and that the scale exhibits high structural coherence. No items with weak or borderline factor loadings were observed (see Appendix A).

Convergent and Discriminant Validity

Scores on the Doomscrolling Scale were positively correlated with other measures of problematic social media use, including social media addiction, fear of missing out, and escapism (see Table 2). These correlations were of moderate magnitude, indicating

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theoretical consistency between doomscrolling and other forms of problematic digital behavior while maintaining construct distinctiveness.

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Table 2

Pearson Correlations Between DSS-15, DSS-4, and External Variables

Variable	<i>M (SD)</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1.	23.58 (12.64)	-								
2.	7.00 (4.00)	.91***	-							
3.	16.20 (5.55)	.32***	.31***	-						
4.	26.03 (7.28)	.34***	.30***	.42***	-					
5.	15.76 (6.61)	.21***	.24***	.59***	.32***	-				
6.	23.16 (4.64)	-.13**	-.10**	-.11**	-.25***	-.19***	-			
7.	19.62 (6.49)	-.01	-.01	-.05	-.13**	-.13**	.61***	-		
8.	8.43 (5.57)	.18***	.16***	.22***	.35***	.27***	-.69***	-.53***	-	
9.	6.76 (5.16)	.28***	.25***	.28***	.34***	.23***	-.35***	-.22***	.62***	-
10	10.36 (5.03)	.18***	.14***	.24***	.41***	.25***	-.57***	-.35***	.69***	.69***

Note. Pearson correlations. *M*= Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation; 1 = Doomscrolling Scale-15; 2 = Doomscrolling Scale-4; 3 = Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale, 4 = Fear of Missing Out Scale; 5 = Escapism Scale; 6 = Short Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale; 7 = Satisfaction with Life Scale; 8 = Depression subscale; 9 = Anxiety subscale; 10 = Stress subscale; $p < .01^{**}$; $p < .001^{***}$

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Additionally, positive correlations were observed with symptoms of anxiety, depression, and stress (H1), as well as a negative correlation with mental well-being (H2). The lack of a significant correlation with life satisfaction suggests that doomscrolling is more closely associated with negative aspects of psychological functioning than with global evaluations of life quality. The observed pattern of correlations supports both the convergent and discriminant validity of the scale. Moreover, the correlation matrix of the heterotrait–monotrait ratios did not show any values exceeding the 0.85 threshold (see Appendix A). The Average Variance Extracted (AVE = .68) exceeded the recommended threshold of .50, indicating that the doomscrolling construct explains a greater proportion of item variance than measurement error (see Table 3).

Reliability of the DSS-15

The 15-item Doomscrolling Scale (DSS-15) demonstrated excellent internal consistency. Cronbach's α was .93 and McDonald's ω was .94, indicating high reliability at the observed level. Composite reliability was .96, reflecting excellent construct-level consistency. Although values above .95 may sometimes suggest potential item redundancy, the very high reliability observed here likely reflects the conceptual homogeneity of the doomscrolling construct (see Table 3).

Table 3

Reliability and Convergent Validity Indices for the DSS-15 and DSS-4

Scale	Number of items	α (alpha)	ω (omega)	CR	AVE
DSS-15	15	.93	.94	.96	.68
DSS-4	4	.78	.74	.84	.66

Note. AVE = Average Variance Extracted; CR = Composite Reliability.

Short Version of the Scale (DSS-4)

Additionally, the shortened version of the scale consistent with the original item selection (DSS-4: Items 1, 2, 10, and 12), was tested. The one-factor model for the DSS-4

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demonstrated good fit according to the CFI and SRMR indices ($\chi^2 (2) = 32.03$; CFI = .991; TLI = .974; SRMR = .065), whereas RMSEA was elevated (RMSEA = .168). All DSS-4 items exhibited high factor loadings (.78–.89), indicating strong representativeness of the latent doomscrolling construct. The highest loadings were observed for items referring to compulsive browsing of negative content and the subjective sense of addiction to bad news.

Validity and Reliability of the DSS-4

Overall, the pattern of HTMT coefficients supports the distinctiveness of doomscrolling from conceptually related psychological variables (see Appendix A). Convergent validity was also supported, with an AVE of .66, well above the recommended .50 threshold.

The reliability of the DSS-4, assessed using Cronbach's alpha, was acceptable ($\alpha = .78$), while model-based reliability estimated using McDonald's omega was $\omega = .74$. The AVE value (.66) exceeded the recommended threshold of .50, indicating good convergent validity of the short version of the scale (see Table 2). Composite reliability reached .84, supporting adequate construct reliability despite the reduced number of items.

Study 2

CFA results in Study 2 confirmed a stable one-factor structure of the Doomscrolling Scale 15. The model demonstrated very good fit to the data: $\chi^2 (90) = 253.42$; CFI = .997; TLI = .996; RMSEA = .059, 90% CI [.050, .067]; SRMR = .052; NFI = .995; IFI = .997; PNFI = .853. All fit indices fell within ranges considered good or very good (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Brown, 2015), confirming the unidimensional structure of the scale. Short version, DSS-4 also demonstrated good fit: $\chi^2 (2) = 18.86$; CFI = .994; TLI = .982; RMSEA = .126, 90% CI [.078, .181]; SRMR = .051.

Mediation Analyses

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First, we tested a mediation model in which social media addiction was associated with war anxiety via the mediator of doomscrolling. Estimates are reported in Table 4. The model yielded a significant overall chi-square statistic, $\chi^2(347) = 1191.00, p < .001$. However, alternative fit indices indicated a good overall model fit, with SRMR = 0.068 and RMSEA = 0.039 (95% CI [0.037, 0.042]). Incremental fit indices were excellent, with CFI = 0.993 and TLI = 0.992. The model explained 14.7% of the variance in DSS ($R^2 = 0.147$) and 25.1% of the variance in war anxiety ($R^2 = 0.251$). Social media addiction had a positive, significant effect on doomscrolling ($B = 0.58, SE = 0.10, 95\% CI [0.38, 0.78], \beta = 0.38, z = 5.69, p < .001$). Doomscrolling, in turn, had a positive, significant effect on war anxiety ($B = 0.56, SE = 0.15, 95\% CI [0.27, 0.85], \beta = 0.51, z = 3.76, p < .001$). The direct effect of social media addiction on war anxiety was not significant ($B = -0.02, SE = 0.08, 95\% CI [-0.18, 0.14], \beta = -0.01, z = -0.25, p = .800$). The indirect effect of social media addiction on war anxiety via doomscrolling was positive and significant (indirect effect: $B = 0.32, SE = 0.11, 95\% CI [0.12, 0.53], \beta = 0.19, z = 3.11, p = .002$). Because the indirect effect is significant while the direct effect is not, the pattern is consistent with full mediation, indicating that the relationship between social media addiction and war anxiety operates primarily through doomscrolling.

Table 4

Direct and Indirect Effects of the Mediation Model

Path	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI [LL, UL]	β	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
Direct effects						
BSMAS → DSS	0.58	0.10	[0.38, 0.78]	0.38	5.69	< .001
DSS → WAS	0.56	0.15	[0.27, 0.85]	0.51	3.76	< .001
BSMAS → WAS	-0.02	0.08	[-0.18, 0.14]	-0.01	-0.25	.800
Indirect effects						
BSMAS → DSS → WAS	0.32	0.11	[0.12, 0.53]	0.19	3.11	.002

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Note. B = unstandardized coefficient; SE = standard error; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; β = standardized coefficient; z = z-score; BSMAS = Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale, DSS = Doomscrolling Scale-15, WAS = War Anxiety Scale.

Alternative Model: WAS → DSS → BSMAS

The alternative model showed good fit to the data: $\chi^2(348) = 1149.00, p < .001$, SRMR = .068, RMSEA = .039 (95% CI [.036, .041]), CFI = .993, and TLI = .992. Both the hypothesized and alternative models were theoretically driven; therefore, we compared them using a chi-square difference test. The results indicated identical fit between the two nested models, suggesting that they were statistically equivalent and that model fit indices alone could not determine the direction of the relationships. In line with our conceptual assumptions regarding the potentially detrimental role of doomscrolling, we retained the theoretically driven model (BSMAS → DSS → WAS), while acknowledging the alternative model as equally plausible and in need of verification in longitudinal research.

Second, we tested a mediation model in which social media addiction was associated with war persistent thinking via the mediator doomscrolling. The findings of the analysis demonstrate that the model exhibits a good fit. The model yielded a significant overall chi-square statistic, $\chi^2(347) = 1213, p < .001$. However, alternative fit indices indicated an acceptable to good model fit, with SRMR = 0.060, RMSEA = .039 (95% CI [.037, .042]), CFI = .994, and TLI = .994. The model explained 16.3% of the variance in the mediating variable DSS ($R^2 = .163$) and 29.8% of the variance in the outcome variable war persistent thinking ($R^2 = .298$). All factor loadings of latent variables were significant at $p < .001$ and acceptable ($>.50$). The mediation analysis showed that social media addiction had a positive and significant direct effect on doomscrolling ($B = 1.01, SE = .19, 95\% CI [.64, 1.39], \beta = .40, z = 5.26, p < .001$). In turn, doomscrolling had a positive and significant direct effect on war persistent thinking ($B = .36, SE = .06, 95\% CI [.25, .47], \beta = .54, z = 6.43, p < .001$).

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Conversely, the direct effect of social media addiction on war persistent thinking was not significant ($B = .03$, $SE = .09$, 95% CI [-.14, .21], $\beta = .02$, $z = .37$, $p = .711$). The indirect effect of social media addiction on war persistent thinking through doomscrolling was positive and statistically significant ($B = .36$, $SE = .09$, 95% CI [.20, .53], $\beta = .22$, $z = 4.28$, $p < .001$), indicating full mediation. See Table 5 for summary results.

Table 5

Direct and Indirect effect of the hypothesized model

<i>Path</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>95% CI [LL, UL]</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
Direct effects						
BSMAS → DSS	1.01	0.19	[0.64, 1.39]	0.40	5.26	< .001
DSS → WPTS	0.36	0.06	[0.25, 0.47]	0.54	6.43	< .001
BSMAS → WPTS	0.03	0.09	[-0.14, 0.21]	0.02	0.37	.711
Indirect effects						
BSMAS → DSS → WPTS	0.36	0.09	[0.20, 0.53]	0.22	4.28	< .001

Note. B = unstandardized coefficient; SE = standard error; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; z = z-score; β = standardized coefficient. We compared models using a robust chi-square difference test ($\Delta\chi^2$) via the ANOVA function BSMAS = Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale, DSS = Doomscrolling Scale-15. WPT = War Persistent Thinking Scale.

Alternative Model: WPTS → DSS → BSMAS

Given the correlational nature of the study, an alternative model was also tested in which doomscrolling mediated the relationship between persistent war-related thinking and social media addiction. This model showed good fit ($\chi^2(347) = 1213.00$, $p < .001$; SRMR = .060; RMSEA = .039; CFI = .994; TLI = .993) and was statistically equivalent to the hypothesized model, indicating that model fit indices alone do not allow for determining the direction of the relationships. As in the previous analysis, both specifications were theoretically grounded: the alternative model aligns with addiction frameworks that view

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excessive media use as a coping response to distress, whereas the primary model emphasizes the potentially detrimental role of doomscrolling in intensifying anxiety-related processes. Therefore, the theoretically driven model (BSMAS → DSS → WPTS) was retained, while acknowledging the alternative model as plausible and in need of verification in longitudinal research.

Both the hypothesized and alternative models are theoretically driven (Bakır & Dilmaç, 2025). The alternative specification is consistent with addiction frameworks and empirical findings suggesting that mental health difficulties, including anxiety, may increase reliance on social media use as a coping mechanism. In contrast, the model retained in the present study emphasizes the potential detrimental role of doomscrolling itself, proposing that repeated exposure to threatening news content may intensify worry and anxiety (Shabahang, 2024). Thus, while we retained the theoretically preferred models (social media addiction → doomscrolling → war anxiety/persistent thinking), the alternative pathways are equally plausible. Future longitudinal or experimental studies are needed to clarify the temporal ordering and reciprocal dynamics among these variables.

Discussion

The exceptionally dynamic development of digital media observed in recent years has led to the emergence of new patterns of information consumption. One such phenomenon is doomscrolling, which has been conceptualized as the recurrent seeking and consumption of information that frequently elicits emotional distress (Sharma et al., 2022). Although scholarly interest in doomscrolling continues to grow, there remains a shortage of standardized and psychometrically sound instruments that would allow for its precise measurement (Satici et al., 2023; Soraci et al., 2025).

Accordingly, the present paper pursued two main objectives. First, it aimed to evaluate the psychometric properties of the full Doomscrolling Scale (DSS-15) and its

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shortened version (DSS-4) (H1–H3). Second, it sought to examine the mediating role of doomscrolling in the relationship between tendencies toward social media addiction and fear of war (H4), as well as intrusive war-related thoughts (H5).

Study 1

For the full version of the doomscrolling scale (DSS-15), the results of the confirmatory factor analysis supported a one-factor structure, yielding very good model fit indices. These findings suggest that doomscrolling can be conceptualized as a relatively homogeneous psychological construct, referring to persistent and compulsive engagement with negative informational content (Güme, 2024; Kaya & Griffiths, 2025; Sharma et al., 2022). Moreover, the obtained results are comparable to those reported for other language adaptations of the scale, including the Italian version (Soraci et al., 2025), the Turkish version, and the Chinese version (Yang et al., 2024). Similarly, the shortened version of the scale (DSS-4) demonstrated very good fit to the data, confirming that the structural integrity of the construct was preserved despite the substantial reduction in the number of items (Sharma et al., 2022; Soraci et al., 2025).

The obtained reliability coefficients for DSS-15 ($\alpha = .93$, $\omega = .94$), together with the high AVE value (.68), indicate strong internal consistency and good convergent validity. Although the reliability indices for DSS-4 were lower than those observed for the full version ($\alpha = .78$, $\omega = .74$), they remain within acceptable ranges for short screening instruments. Importantly, the AVE value for the DSS-4 remained high, indicating adequate convergent validity and suggesting that the shortened version retains a strong latent representation of doomscrolling. These findings are consistent with results reported for other adaptations of the scale (Yang et al., 2024; Satıcı et al., 2023; Sharma et al., 2022; Soraci et al., 2025). What is more, this is a common phenomenon in very simple models with a low number of degrees of freedom ($df = 2$) (Kenny et al., 2015). Accordingly, both DSS-15 and DSS-4 items can be

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considered to adequately represent the underlying construct of doomscrolling (Sharma et al., 2022).

The results of the convergent and discriminant validity analyses supported the proposed research hypotheses. Levels of doomscrolling measured with DSS-15 and DSS-4 were positively and moderately associated with indicators of psychological distress, including anxiety, depression, and stress, as well as with theoretically related constructs such as fear of missing out (FoMO), social media addiction, and escapism (H1). This pattern of associations is consistent with the literature conceptualizing doomscrolling as a maladaptive pattern of digital information consumption that is strongly linked to anxiety-based emotional regulation and compulsive engagement with media content (Akat & Hamarta, 2025; Kaya & Griffiths, 2025; Satici et al., 2023; Shabahang et al., 2024; Soraci et al., 2025). Importantly, despite the statistical significance and magnitude of these associations, doomscrolling did not exhibit correlation levels indicative of excessive construct overlap, suggesting that it represents a distinct psychological phenomenon rather than merely a byproduct of generalized problematic social media use.

Furthermore, both DSS-15 and DSS-4 showed weak negative associations with measures of psychological well-being and were not significantly related to life satisfaction. The weak correlations with global indicators of well-being and life satisfaction suggest that doomscrolling is more strongly associated with negative dimensions of psychological functioning than with broad, cognitive evaluations of overall life quality. This pattern provides additional support for the discriminant validity of the DSS-15 and DSS-4 and is consistent with previous empirical findings (Satici et al., 2023; Sharma et al., 2022; Taskin et al., 2024; Usman et al., 2025).

It is also noteworthy that the strength of correlations supporting convergent validity was systematically higher than the strength of correlations supporting discriminant validity

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(H3). This differential pattern of associations provides further evidence that both DSS-15 and DSS-4 validly assess a construct that is theoretically and empirically closer to psychological distress and compulsive media behaviors than to broadly defined subjective well-being (Yang et al., 2024; Satici et al., 2023; Sharma et al., 2022; Soraci et al., 2025).

A comparative analysis of both versions of the scale suggests that DSS-15 constitutes a more suitable instrument for in-depth research applications, where high measurement precision and sensitivity to subtle individual differences are required. In contrast, the shortened DSS-4 may be effectively employed in screening contexts, large-scale population studies, and research designs in which time constraints or respondent burden constitute important methodological considerations (Sharma et al., 2022). This approach aligns with current trends in psychometrics, which emphasize the utility of brief yet valid measurement instruments, provided that their core psychometric properties are preserved (Marsh et al., 2005). In summary, the Polish versions of the Doomscrolling Scale (both DSS-15 and DSS-4) demonstrate good validity and reliability indices, consistent with previous research employing this instrument in studies on problematic media use (Price et al., 2022).

Study 2

The results of the second study provide empirical support for the proposed mediation model and are consistent with theoretical assumptions and previous research indicating associations between maladaptive patterns of media consumption, heightened anxiety, and threat-oriented information processing (Chudzicka-Czupala et al., 2023; Malecki et al., 2023; Shabahang et al., 2024).

First, the confirmatory factor analysis conducted in Study 2 once again confirmed the one-factor structure of the Doomscrolling Scale. All fit indices reached satisfactory levels, supporting the structural stability of the scale and providing further evidence that doomscrolling, as measured by the DSS-15, can be conceptualized as a coherent

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psychological construct reflecting threat-oriented engagement with digital information (Yang et al., 2024; Satici et al., 2023; Sharma et al., 2022).

In line with the proposed hypotheses, mediation analyses conducted for Model 4 demonstrated that doomscrolling fully mediated the relationships between problematic social media use and both anxiety of war (H4) and persistent thinking about war (H5). Specifically, problematic social media use significantly predicted higher levels of doomscrolling, which in turn was significantly associated with increased war-related intrusive thinking and heightened anxiety of war. Notably, after including doomscrolling in the model, the direct relationships between problematic social media use and both dependent variables became statistically non-significant, indicating a full mediation effect. These findings suggest that problematic engagement with social media does not directly translate into increased war-related anxiety or persistent war-related thinking. Rather, these effects appear to operate through a specific pattern of media consumption characterized by repeated exposure to negatively valenced content (Akat & Hamarta, 2025; Özmen, 2025; Shabahang et al., 2024).

From a psychological perspective, the obtained results are consistent with cognitive models of anxiety, which emphasize the role of threat-focused information processing, selective attention to danger cues, and catastrophic interpretations in the maintenance of anxiety symptoms (Beck, 1976; Beck & Clark, 1997). Doomscrolling may be understood as a behavioral manifestation of such cognitive distortions, wherein repeated engagement with distressing war-related content activates maladaptive schemas related to threat, vulnerability, and loss of control (Chudzicka-Czupala et al., 2023; Özmen, 2025). Within this framework, addictive patterns of social media use increase vulnerability to entering and maintaining this mode of information processing, while doomscrolling translates excessive media engagement into heightened emotional responses to war-related threats.

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The context of the war in Ukraine constitutes a particularly important background for interpreting these findings. Previous studies conducted in Poland have shown that the negatively perceived impact of media exposure to war-related content is associated with higher levels of anxiety and distress, as well as reduced psychological resilience (Chudzicka-Czupała et al., 2023; Malecki et al., 2023). Due to Poland's geographical proximity to Ukraine, extensive involvement in refugee assistance, and widespread concerns about potential conflict escalation, individuals living in Poland may experience elevated threat perception even in the absence of direct exposure to warfare (Surzykiewicz et al., 2022). In such a context, doomscrolling may intensify perceived threat by continuously reinforcing danger-related narratives and imagery, thereby maintaining anxiety and persistent war-related thoughts (Malecki et al., 2023; Özmen, 2025).

In summary, the findings of Study 2 indicate that doomscrolling constitutes a key psychological mechanism linking problematic social media use with anxiety and persistent thinking about war. Identifying doomscrolling as a full mediator contributes to a deeper understanding of how digital media environments may shape emotional responses to macro-level societal threats.

Practical Implications

The developed local version of the Doomscrolling Scale constitutes a practical and reliable instrument that enables the identification of individuals characterized by an increased risk of engaging in maladaptive patterns of media use, understood as excessive exposure to negative informational content. The scale may be applied both in scientific research and in applied contexts, such as psychological assessment, as well as in various preventive programs and psychoeducational interventions aimed at promoting digital hygiene and healthy media use habits. In clinical contexts, the Doomscrolling Scale may be used for the early identification of dysfunctional coping strategies related to emotion regulation, anxiety, and

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stress management (Mannell & Meese, 2022). The scale may also be employed to monitor changes in the intensity of doomscrolling over time, for example in response to psychological interventions, media literacy training, or digital well-being programs. From a broader perspective, findings obtained using this scale may support public health initiatives, particularly considering the growing number of local adaptations and the development of international initiatives. Additionally, the scale may contribute to educational campaigns aimed at increasing awareness of the psychological consequences of excessive exposure to negative online content and at promoting adaptive strategies for information consumption in digital environments (Soraci et al., 2025).

The results about mediation effect indicate that doomscrolling may be an important behavioral link between problematic social media use and heightened war-related anxiety and persistent negative thinking. Practically, interventions aimed at improving mental well-being in times of crisis could benefit from addressing excessive exposure to negative news content (Akat & Hamarta, 2025).

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although the psychometric properties of the scale demonstrated satisfactory parameters and the mediation results proved to be statistically significant, several important limitations of the present studies should be acknowledged. First, in the assessment of the scale's properties, the distribution of scale scores deviated from normality. This may limit the applicability of certain analytical methods and hinder the generalizability of the findings (Kline, 2023).

Second, the sample structure in both Study 1 and Study 2 was characterized by a substantial overrepresentation of women, which may have influenced the observed relationships and limits the extent to which the results can be generalized to men and individuals with other gender identities (Hyde, 2014). Third, both studies (validation and

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correlational) were conducted exclusively in non-clinical samples, which precludes drawing conclusions regarding the severity of doomscrolling and its consequences in clinical or high-risk populations (Bornstein, 2017).

The mediation results should be interpreted cautiously due to the cross-sectional design. Although the models support the role of doomscrolling as a mediator, alternative directional pathways were statistically equivalent, suggesting possible reciprocal relationships. Longitudinal or experimental research is needed to clarify causal ordering and determine whether reducing doomscrolling leads to improvements in anxiety and related outcomes (Akat & Hamarta, 2025).

Therefore, future research should employ more diverse samples, including individuals from clinical populations and samples with a more balanced gender distribution. In addition, future analyses should incorporate a test–retest procedure to assess the temporal stability of the scale and to further strengthen evidence for its reliability (DeVellis, 2021). It would also be valuable to consider the use of longitudinal designs and multigroup analyses to evaluate measurement invariance across different groups (Meredith, 1993).

Conclusions

To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first to provide a Polish local validation of the Doomscrolling Scale (Appendix B). Despite the limitations described above, the conducted analyses provide evidence that the scale is a reliable and valid instrument for measuring the tendency toward compulsive consumption of negative informational content. The results indicate that the scale has high research and applied potential, given the significant associations between doomscrolling and dimensions of mental health.

Accordingly, both the full version of the Doomscrolling Scale, consisting of 15 items, and the shortened version comprising four items may be used in scientific research as well as in diagnostic and preventive practice, thereby contributing to a more precise understanding of

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the consequences of excessive exposure to negative information in digital environments.

Furthermore, our study demonstrated the full mediating role of doomscrolling between media addiction and of war anxiety, as well as war persistent thinking. This suggests that excessive engagement with negative media content may exacerbate psychological distress related to conflict by perpetuating a cycle of compulsive information seeking and heightened threat perception.

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Appendix A

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Doomscrolling Scale Items

Item	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
DOOM1	1	7	2.04	1.494	1.388	.106	.843	.212
DOOM2	1	7	2.28	1.643	1.124	.106	.087	.212
DOOM3	1	7	1.70	1.343	2.193	.106	4.252	.212
DOOM4	1	7	1.30	.951	3.894	.106	15.755	.212
DOOM5	1	7	1.47	1.142	2.909	.106	8.447	.212
DOOM6	1	7	1.55	1.211	2.582	.106	6.248	.212
DOOM7	1	7	1.41	.982	2.880	.106	8.513	.212
DOOM8	1	7	1.38	.960	3.026	.106	9.710	.212
DOOM9	1	7	1.30	.923	3.672	.106	13.872	.212
DOOM10	1	7	1.41	1.075	3.129	.106	9.597	.212
DOOM11	1	7	1.58	1.275	2.489	.106	5.710	.212
DOOM12	1	7	1.28	.899	4.078	.106	18.200	.212
DOOM13	1	7	1.36	1.025	3.448	.106	12.112	.212
DOOM14	1	7	1.87	1.482	1.756	.106	2.120	.212
DOOM15	1	7	1.66	1.267	2.101	.106	3.867	.212

Note. *M* = Mean, *SD* = Standard deviation, *SE* = Standard Error.

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Table 2

Standardized Factor Loadings for the DSS-15 and DSS-4

Item	DSS-15	DSS-4	M(SD)
DOOM1	.73	.84	2.04 (1.49)
DOOM2	.71	.75	2.28 (1.64)
DOOM3	.77		1.70 (1.34)
DOOM4	.85		1.30 (.95)
DOOM5	.91		1.47 (1.14)
DOOM6	.81		1.55 (1.21)
DOOM7	.74		1.41 (.98)
DOOM8	.79		1.38 (.96)
DOOM9	.86		1.30 (.92)
DOOM10	.93	.88	1.41 (1.08)
DOOM11	.79		1.58 (1.28)
DOOM12	.90	.89	1.28 (.90)
DOOM13	.88		1.36 (1.03)
DOOM14	.78		1.87 (1.48)
DOOM15	.87		1.66 (1.27)

Note. All factor loadings were statistically significant ($p < .001$). The single-factor model was estimated using the WLSMV method for ordinal data, allowing for residual correlations between DOOM1 and DOOM2 items. All factor loadings were statistically significant at $p < .001$.

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Table 3

HTMT Ratios Between study Constructs

Variable	M(SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. DSS-15	23.58 (12.64)	—									
2. DSS-4	7.00 (4.00)	.53	—								
3. FOMO	16.20 (5.55)	.30	.23	—							
4. BSMAS	26.03 (7.28)	.36	.25	.49	—						
5. Escapism	15.76 (6.61)	.21	.13	.38	.55	—					
6. SWEMWBS	23.16 (4.64)	.17	.04	.23	.17	.23	—				
7. SWLS	19.62 (6.49)	.13	.02	.25	.14	.20	.63	—			
8. Depression	8.43 (5.57)	.24	.11	.38	.27	.28	.67	.60	—		
9. Anxiety	6.76 (5.16)	.35	.19	.36	.30	.25	.43	.29	.62	—	
10. Stress	10.36 (5.03)	.29	.15	.43	.33	.27	.53	.36	.70	.73	—

Note. Values below .85 indicate satisfactory discriminant validity; DSS-15 Doomscrolling

Scale-15 ; DSS-4 = Doomscrolling Scale-4; FOMO = Fear of Missing Out; BSMAS =

Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale, Escapism = Escapism Social Media Scale;

SWEMWBS = The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale - WEMWBS; SWLS =

Satisfaction with Life Scale; Depression = Depression DASS-21 Scale; Anxiety = Anxiety

DASS-21 Scale; Stress = Stress DASS-21 Scale.

Appendix B

Polska i Angielska Wersja Skali Doomscrollingu (DSS-15) Polish and English Version of the Doomscrolling Scale (DSS-15)

Poniżej przedstawiono treść pozycji polskiej wersji Skali Doomscrollingu (DSS-15) wykorzystanej w badaniu. Skala służy do pomiaru tendencji do kompulsywnego śledzenia negatywnych informacji w mediach społecznościowych. [Below are the items of the Polish version of the Doomscrolling Scale (DSS-15) used in the study. The scale is designed to measure the tendency to compulsively follow negative information on social media.]

Respondenci proszeni są o ocenę, w jakim stopniu każde z poniższych stwierdzeń odnosi się do ich zachowań i odczuć, korzystając z 7-punktowej skali odpowiedzi: [Participants are asked to indicate the extent to which each of the following statements applies to their behaviours and experiences using a 7-point response format:]

1 – zdecydowanie nie / strongly disagree

2 – raczej nie / rather disagree

3 – nie / disagree

4 – ani tak, ani nie / neither agree nor disagree

5 – tak / agree

6 – raczej tak / rather agree

7 – zdecydowanie tak / strongly agree

Pozycje Skali / Scale Items:

1. Coraz częściej odczuwam potrzebę śledzenia złych wiadomości w mediach społecznościowych. * / 1. I feel an urge to seek bad news on social media, more and more often. *
2. Gdy czytam złe wiadomości w mediach społecznościowych, tracę poczucie czasu. * / 2. I lose track of time when I read bad news on social media. *

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3. Ciągłe odświeżam swoje kanały informacyjne, aby sprawdzić, czy nie wydarzyło się coś złego./ 3. I constantly refresh my newsfeeds to see if something bad happened.
4. Zdarza mi się zarywać noc, żeby znaleźć więcej negatywnych wiadomości. / 4. I stay up late at night trying to find more negative news.
5. Czytanie złych wiadomości w mediach społecznościowych stało się dla mnie nawykiem./ 5. Reading negative news on social media is more of a habit now.
6. Kiedy jestem online, czuję napięcie, jakby miało się wkrótce wydarzyć coś złego. / 6. When I am online, I feel tense as if something bad is going to happen soon.
7. Podczas przeglądania telefonu często towarzyszy mi poczucie paniki./ 7. I constantly feel panicked while scrolling on my device.
8. Zdarza mi się nieświadomie sprawdzać kanały informacyjne w poszukiwaniu złych wiadomości./ 8. I unconsciously check my newsfeeds for bad news.
9. Nawet jeśli aplikacja pokazuje, że jestem „na bieżąco”, dalej przewijam w poszukiwaniu negatywnych treści./ 9. Even if my newsfeed says I am all caught up, I just keep scrolling for negative news.
10. Łapię się na tym, że wciąż przeglądam negatywne wiadomości. */ 10. I find myself continuously browsing negative news. *
11. Rano sprawdzam media społecznościowe, żeby zobaczyć, co złego wydarzyło się w świecie. / I check social media in the morning to see what bad things have happened.
12. Mam poczucie, że jestem uzależniony od złych wiadomości. */ 12. I feel like I am addicted to negative news. *
13. Moje wyszukiwania w mediach społecznościowych sprawiają, że mój kanał staje się coraz bardziej negatywny./ 13. My social media searches probably make my newsfeeds more negative.

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14. To, co widzę w mediach społecznościowych, często mnie przeraża, ale nie potrafię odwrócić wzroku./ 14. I am terrified by what I see on social media but I cannot look away.

15. Trudno mi przerwać czytanie negatywnych wiadomości w mediach społecznościowych. / 15. It's difficult to stop reading negative news on social media.

Uwaga / Note. Pozycje oznaczone gwiazdką (*) tworzą skróconą wersję skali (DSS-4).

Wszystkie pozycje są punktowane w tym samym kierunku — wyższy wynik oznacza większe nasilenie doomscrollingu. [Items marked with an asterisk (*) constitute the short version of the scale (DSS-4). All items are scored in the same direction, with higher scores indicating greater levels of doomscrolling.]