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Exploring the Relationship Between Doomscrolling and English Learning Motivation among EFL Students

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Abstract
Doomscrolling refers to persistent scrolling through online content and may coincide with interruptions to students' daily routines. This study examined the relationship between doomscrolling-related behavior and English-learning interference among respondents in English-related study programs in Indonesia. The Google Forms spreadsheet contained 51 submissions; 29 respondents whose self-reported program names identified English-related fields were included in the exploratory analysis. The questionnaire comprised 17 closed-ended five-point Likert statements and one open-ended question. Descriptive results showed that 19 of 29 respondents (65.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that they scrolled when tired or bored, and 16 of 29 (55.2%) reported difficulty focusing during English-learning sessions after being online for a long time. Pearson correlation indicated a moderate positive association between the doomscrolling-related behavior composite and the English-learning interference composite, $r(27) = 0.55$, $p = 0.002$, 95% CI [0.23, 0.76]. The findings indicate an association between self-reported digital behavior and learning interference, not a causal effect. The study also discusses digital self-regulation in relation to responsible use of time and moderation in Islamic educational contexts.

Keywords:
Doomscrolling; EFL students; English-learning interference; digital self-regulation; Islamic education

A. INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an increasingly common part of students' everyday lives and offers various opportunities for English language learning. Through digital platforms, students can access authentic English materials, interact with other users, and engage with language beyond formal classroom settings. In Indonesian EFL classrooms, the integration of digital media has also been associated with students' engagement in learning activities (Ardiyanti & Rohmah, 2026). However, the educational value of social media depends partly on how students use these platforms. While purposeful engagement may support language exposure, excessive or poorly regulated use can interfere with academic activities. Ahmed et al. (2024), in their systematic review and meta-analysis, found that problematic social media use was associated with poorer mental health and sleep outcomes, although general social media use did not demonstrate the same patterns consistently. One form of problematic engagement that has attracted growing attention is *doomscrolling*, which refers to the persistent consumption of negative or distressing information through continuous scrolling on digital platforms (Satici et al., 2023). Recent research has also identified a relationship between social media addiction and doomscrolling among adolescents (Akat & Hamarta, 2025).

Previous studies have examined the relationship between social media use and various aspects of students' psychological well-being and academic experiences. However, the effects of social media engagement are not necessarily uniform across individuals. Beyens et al. (2024), for example, demonstrated that social media use can have different well-being effects depending on individual experiences and patterns of use. Beyond psychological well-being, prolonged exposure to digital information may also contribute to information overload, social fatigue, and procrastination (Li et al., 2023). Similarly, research on problematic social media use has explored its relationship with academic procrastination and students' academic experiences (Avci et al., 2024; Touloupis & Campbell, 2024). These suggest that the potential consequences of digital engagement extend beyond the amount of time students spend online and may involve difficulties in managing attention and academic responsibilities. It is related to English language learning, which requires sustained attention, regular practice, and active engagement. Although students may use social media to access English-language content, competing digital activities may also reduce the time and attention available for learning. It is important because students' motivation to learn English does not necessarily translate into consistent learning practices. Erniyati and Putra (2022), for instance, reported that EFL students demonstrated considerable motivation to learn English, highlighting the importance of understanding the conditions that may support or interfere with their learning activities.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) offers a useful perspective for understanding how students regulate their learning activities and sustain motivation. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), motivation is influenced by the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In digital environments, these needs may also shape how students engage with social media and manage their learning activities. West et al. (2024), for example, used SDT to examine adolescent social media use and emphasized the relevance of psychological needs in understanding digital engagement. Thus, frequent engagement with social media may become relevant to learning when it competes with students' efforts to manage their time, maintain study routines, and complete academic tasks. Although SDT helps explain the motivational processes underlying students' engagement, the present study does not directly measure the satisfaction of these three psychological needs. Instead, the theory provides a broader perspective for considering how students' digital engagement may relate to their ability to regulate and sustain English-learning activities.

Despite growing interest in problematic social media use and its academic implications, less attention has been given to how doomscrolling-related behavior is associated with students' experiences of English language learning, particularly among Indonesian EFL students. Existing studies have primarily examined social media use in relation to psychological well-being, sleep, and general academic outcomes. The relationship between doomscrolling-related behavior and difficulties in maintaining English-learning activities therefore warrants further investigation. Addressing this issue may provide a more specific understanding of how students' digital engagement relates to their attention, study routines, and task completion in English learning. Accordingly, this study investigates the relationship between doomscrolling-related behavior and English-learning interference among Indonesian EFL students. Specifically, it addresses the following research question: What is the relationship between doomscrolling-related behavior and English-learning interference among Indonesian EFL students? It is hypothesized that higher levels of doomscrolling-related behavior are positively associated with greater self-reported interference in English-learning activities.

B. METHODS

This study employed a quantitative correlational design to examine the association between doomscrolling-related behavior and self-reported English-learning interference. Data were collected through Google Forms between 13 October and 13 November 2025, yielding 51 responses. Based on participants' self-reported study programs, 29 responses from students in English-related fields were retained, while 22 were excluded because their entries indicated non-English-related or unclear programs. Participant screening relied solely on the free-text study-program field, and EFL status was not independently verified. Participation was voluntary and followed a non-probability sampling approach.

The questionnaire consisted of 17 closed-ended statements using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) and one open-ended question. Five items measured doomscrolling-related behavior, while seven assessed English-learning interference, covering concentration, procrastination, practice time, interest, learning consistency, and perceived balance. The balance item was reverse-scored. Two respondents left two interference items unanswered; their composite scores were calculated using available responses. The questionnaire had no documented formal expert validation or pilot testing; therefore, the item groupings were treated as exploratory. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha, and Pearson's product–moment correlation. Composite scores were calculated by averaging the relevant items. Cronbach's alpha was used to examine internal consistency, while Pearson's correlation assessed the direction and strength of the association between the two composite variables among the 29 respondents. The findings were interpreted as associations rather than causal effects.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The initial dataset consisted of 51 questionnaire submissions. Based on the self-reported study-program information, 29 respondents were identified as students in English-related programs and retained for analysis, while the remaining 22 responses were excluded because they identified other fields or did not clearly indicate an English-related program. The analytic subgroup was predominantly composed of semester 3 students (27/29, 93.1%). Regarding daily social-media use, most respondents reported spending 4–6 hours on social media (13/29, 44.8%), followed by 1–3 hours (9/29, 31.0%). Six respondents (20.7%) reported using social media for more than six hours daily, while one respondent (3.4%) reported less than one hour.

Table 1. Profile of the analytic subgroup (n = 29)

Characteristic	Category	n (%)
Study-program screening	English-related program	29 (56.9% of 51 submissions)
Study-program screening	Other / not clearly English-related	22 (43.1% of 51 submissions)
Current semester	Semester 1	1 (3.4%)
Current semester	Semester 3	27 (93.1%)
Current semester	Semester 5 or higher	1 (3.4%)
Daily social-media use	Less than 1 hour	1 (3.4%)
Daily social-media use	1–3 hours	9 (31.0%)
Daily social-media use	4–6 hours	13 (44.8%)
Daily social-media use	More than 6 hours	6 (20.7%)

Table 2 summarizes selected questionnaire items. Agreement combines the Agree and Strongly Agree categories; the denominator is the number of valid responses to each item. These are item-level descriptive results, not diagnostic classifications.

Table 2. Selected item responses: Agree/Strongly Agree versus other responses

Questionnaire item	Agree/ Strongly Agree, n (%)	Other responses (%)	Valid n
Scroll through social media when tired or bored	19 (65.5%)	10 (34.5%)	29
Social-media use before sleep affects rest time	15 (51.7%)	14 (48.3%)	29
Feel emotionally exhausted after long social-media use	14 (48.3%)	15 (51.7%)	29
Difficulty focusing during English-learning sessions after being online	16 (55.2%)	13 (44.8%)	29
Procrastinate on English-learning tasks because of online distractions	14 (48.3%)	15 (51.7%)	29
Social-media content replaces time for English practice	11 (37.9%)	18 (62.1%)	29
Lose interest in English practice after doomscrolling	5 (18.5%)	22 (81.5%)	27
Social-media distractions make English-learning routine less consistent	5 (18.5%)	22 (81.5%)	27

1. Doom Scrolling Behavior :

For the statement about scrolling through social media when tired or bored, 19 of 29 respondents agreed or strongly agreed (65.5%). Fifteen respondents (51.7%) also agreed or strongly agreed that

social-media use before sleep affected their rest time. These responses suggest that scrolling in moments of tiredness and use before sleep were commonly reported within this subgroup, although the questionnaire does not establish the duration or objective effects of these behaviors.

2. Emotional and Cognitive Impacts

Regarding emotional and cognitive experiences, 14 of 29 respondents (48.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that they felt emotionally exhausted after long periods on social media. For the statement about difficulty focusing during English-learning sessions after being online for a long time, 16 of 29 (55.2%) selected Agree or Strongly Agree. These descriptive responses indicate perceived overlap between prolonged online activity and difficulties with attention, but they do not establish the direction of influence.

3. English Learning Motivation

Fourteen of 29 respondents (48.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that they sometimes procrastinated on English-learning tasks because of online distractions, while 11 of 29 (37.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that social-media content sometimes replaced time for English practice. For the two items with missing responses, 5 of 27 respondents (18.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that they lost interest in practicing English after doomscrolling, and 5 of 27 (18.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that social-media distractions made it harder to maintain a consistent English-learning routine. Neutral responses were common on several items, so the results should not be described as uniform across participants. At the composite-score level, the Pearson correlation showed a moderate positive association between doomscrolling-related behavior and English-learning interference, $r(27) = 0.55$, $p = 0.002$, 95% CI [0.23, 0.76], $n = 29$. Higher scores on the second composite represent greater self-reported interference or difficulty, rather than higher positive motivation. Thus, respondents reporting more doomscrolling-related behavior also tended to report more interference with English learning. This is an association, not evidence that doomscrolling caused reduced motivation. The confidence interval is wide, and the small, selected subgroup limits the precision and generalizability of the estimate.

Table 3. Composite-score descriptives and association

Measure	Mean coefficient	SD / p-value	Reliability / confidence interval
Doomscrolling-related behavior composite	3.21	0.74	0.78
English-learning interference composite	3.01	0.57	0.74
Pearson correlation between composites	r = 0.55	p = 0.002	95% CI [0.23, 0.76]

The findings indicate that doomscrolling-related behavior was relatively common among the participants, particularly when they felt tired or bored and when using social media before bedtime. These patterns suggest that social media scrolling may become part of students' everyday routines, potentially extending beyond purposeful online activities. Previous studies have associated doomscrolling and excessive social media engagement with psychological distress, sleep-related difficulties, and challenges in managing daily activities (Fitri, 2025; Li & Yin, 2026; Meier & Reinecke, 2023; Sa'idah & Aryani, 2025; Satici et al., 2023). However, the relationship between social media use and well-being is not necessarily negative in every context, as the effects may depend on individual experiences and patterns of engagement (Beyens et al., 2024; Meier & Reinecke, 2023).

Regarding English learning, the findings suggest that perceived interference was more apparent in students' concentration, task completion, and opportunities to practise English than in their interest in learning the language. Although some participants reported postponing English-learning tasks or experiencing difficulty concentrating after spending time online, relatively few reported losing interest in English practice. This suggests that students may remain motivated to learn English while struggling to maintain consistent learning routines. Previous research has highlighted the importance of motivation, language mindset, and sustained engagement in English learning, particularly in speaking practice and the development of learning persistence (Esteban et al., 2023; Liu, 2022). Meanwhile, studies on problematic social media use and academic procrastination indicate that excessive digital engagement may be associated with difficulties in managing academic responsibilities (Avci et al., 2024; Touloupis & Campbell, 2024). Thus, the present findings point

more specifically to interruptions in learning activities rather than a direct decline in students' motivation.

The positive correlation between doomscrolling-related behavior and self-reported English-learning interference ($r = .55$, $p = .002$) further indicates that students reporting more frequent doomscrolling-related behavior also tended to experience greater difficulties in managing their English-learning activities. This finding corresponds with previous research linking excessive social media use to academic performance and student engagement (Nand & Shaikh Ali, 2022; Su & Huang, 2021). Research on technology-induced engagement and motivation also demonstrates that digital technology can contribute positively to students' learning experiences when its use is aligned with educational activities (Damayanti et al., 2024; Rindrayani et al., 2025). Similarly, technology integration in Indonesian EFL classrooms illustrates the continuing educational value of digital resources for language teaching and learning (Rohmana, 2025). These findings suggest that the relationship between digital engagement and learning is not determined by technology itself, but partly by how students use it. The present correlation should nevertheless be interpreted as an association rather than evidence that doomscrolling directly causes learning interference.

D. CONCLUSION

This study found a moderate positive association between doomscrolling-related behavior and reported interference with English learning among 29 respondents, suggesting that greater engagement in doomscrolling-related activities was associated with greater perceived disruption to English-learning activities. However, this relationship should be understood as an association rather than a causal effect. The findings highlight the importance of promoting students' awareness of digital media habits and their potential interference with learning. EFL educators may encourage students to manage their screen time, set realistic learning goals, minimize digital distractions, and develop more purposeful media-use habits. In Islamic educational contexts, these practices may also be connected to values of moderation, self-discipline, and responsible time management. This study has several limitations. The analysis involved a relatively small sample of 29 respondents selected from 51 submissions based on their reported study programs. In addition, the questionnaire's construct validity and reliability were not sufficiently documented. Future studies should involve larger and more diverse samples, employ validated instruments that distinguish doomscrolling behavior, learning interference, and English-learning motivation, and provide clearer documentation of scoring procedures. Longitudinal or mixed-methods approaches are also recommended to explore how digital media habits relate to students' learning experiences over time.

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