Doomscrolling in the Context of Positive Psychology Analysis

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Abstract

The concept of "doomscrolling", which has been used in the literature for the last few years and translated into Turkish as "disaster scrolling", is defined as individuals following sad, depressing or negative news persistently by swiping the screen over social media news feeds. The concept of 'doomscrolling' can be defined as the individual's focusing more on news with negative content on social media or the internet and continuing to read negative content continuously. It can be said that the concept of Doomscrolling is closely related to the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and the concept of well-being based on positive psychology. In addition, FoMO is like doomscrolling in terms of avoiding catastrophic situations but differs in terms of missing positive social experiences (for example, joining a party). According to positive psychology, the aim of the counseling approach is not to bring the clients from the negative point to the starting point where there is no problem, but to help the clients with or without the problem to reveal their hidden powers and to take the clients further from a positive point regardless of the starting point. From this point of view, the field of positive psychology emphasizes being preventive rather than curative. Individuals who apply to psychological counseling come to therapy not only with complaints but also with their strong characteristics. When considered in this way, the goal of the counseling approach is to highlight the individual's strengths and to support the use of these features.

Keywords: Doomscrolling; Disaster Scrolling; Positive Psychology; Nomophobia; Anxiety Disorder

Introduction

Internet and social media continue to take place more and more in the daily life of the individual day by day. As such, many addictions arise. Especially because of global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic in the last few years, social media usage habits have started to change, and new concepts have begun to emerge. We can say that the concept of "doomscrolling", which has been used in the literature for the last few years and translated into Turkish as "disaster scrolling", is one of them. It is known that this concept emerged in 2018 and was popularized by journalist Karen Ho [1]. Doomscrolling has been defined as individuals following sad, depressing or negative news persistently by swiping the screen over social media news feeds [2]. Similarly, the Oxford Dictionary included the concept of 'doomscrolling' under the title of the unprecedented words of the year in 2020 and defined it as 'the act of compulsively scrolling through social media or news feeds about bad news' [3]. From this point of view, the concept of 'doomscrolling' can be defined as the individual's focusing more on news with negative content on social media or the internet and continuing to read negative content continuously.

Although the concept of disaster scrolling emerged before the COVID-19 pandemic, we can say that the most used period was after the pandemic. It can be said that the changing social media and internet consumption habits after the pandemic have an impact on this. The Reuters Institute Digital News Report replicated its 2020 survey in selected countries in the wake of the pandemic and found that the crisis had significantly increased news consumption. While print media declined further, there were certain increases in news use via television and online sources, as well as social media and messaging services [4]. Young adults have a large population in social media and internet use. At the same time, many psychopathological problems emerged in early adult individuals in the pandemic [5]. When looked at, individuals in this age group are more likely to use smartphones and social media both problematically and regularly [6]. In addition, it is known that 84% of young adults actively use social media. The question of whether such exposure to social media affects the psychopathological states of individuals is also gaining importance [7].

Many factors can be involved in the disaster scrolling of individuals. Some of these factors are constant search for information, constant scanning to prove one's own hypotheses or to refute the other party's hypothesis. This situation is called confirmation bias [8]. In addition, in recent years, some algorithmic systems called cookies on the internet provide new content to the individual by looking at the individual's browsing on the internet [9]. Disaster shifting behavior may become compulsive in the individual exposed to this situation. Similarly, different motivations may emerge in disaster scrolling. One of them is the excessive use of social media platforms because of difficulties in emotion regulation. When individuals experience low mood, decreased interest in activities, and a high level of fatigue, they spend more time on digital platforms to overcome these and raise their mood [10].

Considering the studies in the literature, it has been observed that excessive internet use is associated with many depressive and psychological disorders [11]. On the other hand, when individuals do not use the internet, their depressive disorders increase more. This creates a vicious circle for the individual. In addition, cognitive biases cause us to feel anxious, increase the level of uncertainty, and search for information that is important for survival. In addition, the lost sense of control over the environment is regained by accessing information to improve mood and reduce anxiety and uncertainty. In such cases, instead of increasing the sense of control, the individual becomes open to consuming false and incomplete information that reduces control. However, our fears are confirmed, anxiety and uncertainty increase, and we find ourselves in a vicious circle of constant need to know, so disaster shift becomes a constant need [12]. In addition, regional and global events can trigger individuals' search for information. It can be said that new studies have been conducted on the concept of doomscrolling, which has started to come to the fore in literature. So much so that Ken Yeager, who works as a psychiatrist at the Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, states that our brain likes to focus on these kinds of things, namely negative things. On the face of it, we are all programmed to see and be drawn to the negative, because we can act on the thought that it can physically harm us. The concept of doomscrolling can be compared to an older phenomenon of the 1970s called the mean earth syndrome: "As a result of prolonged exposure to violence; – the belief that the world is a more dangerous place to live than it really is – relevant content on television." Research shows that seeing sad news prompts people to seek more information on the topic and creates a self-perpetuating cycle [13].

Concept Analysis of Disaster Scrolling in The Context of Positive Psychology Analysis

It can be said that the concept of Doomscrolling is closely related to the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and the concept of well-being based on positive psychology. Fear of Missing Out is considered as a type of addiction that causes spending a long time in social environments in order not to miss the developments in social environments and to be informed, as the internet and smart devices have an important place in the life of the individual [14]. In addition, FoMO is like doomscrolling in terms of avoiding catastrophic situations but differs in missing positive social experiences (for example, attending a party) [15].

At the point of well-being, focusing on negative information may harm the physical and mental well-being of the individual, while individuals with low welfare levels may still resort to focusing on negative information [16]. In addition, when we look at the literature, it is seen that there are studies stating that following negative news affects the well-being of the individual. However, it can be said that there are important similarities between the principles of positive psychology and the approach of psychological counseling approach to the nature of the individual. According to positive psychology, the aim of the counseling approach is not to bring the clients from the negative point to the starting point where there is no problem, but to help the clients with or without the problem to reveal their hidden powers and to take the clients further from a positive point regardless of the starting point. From this point of view, the field of positive psychology emphasizes being preventive rather than curative. Individuals who apply to psychological counseling come to therapy not only with complaints but also with their strong characteristics. When considered in this way, the goal of the counseling approach is to highlight the individual's strengths and support the use of these features [17].

According to Young & Hutchinson [18], the concepts studied in the field of positive psychology are not only related to the counseling approach, but also as an extension of the methods used in the field of psychological counseling. When looked at, it is seen that these methods in the field of psychological counseling and guidance lag other approaches. In addition, it is aimed to reveal the strengths of individuals in the field of psychological counseling and to realize the latent aspects of individuals. From this point of view, it can be said that the studies of Rogers and Maslow have been brought to the forefront together with the positive psychology approach [18,19]. Because the positive psychology approach prioritizes the strengths of individuals, it draws attention both in the literature and in daily life and becomes widespread over time. According to Lopez et al. [20], besides the increasing interest in positive psychology, many points that have an important place in the principles of positive psychology are put into the background. In addition, studies of psychologists who have studied the strengths of individuals in the past, what is a good life and cultural factors that are important in achieving a good life, environmental factors that are effective at the point of functionality, and career counselors' research that examine what is needed for a better life are often used when studying positive psychology. are secondary concepts. From this point of view, the psychological counseling approach, which focuses on improving

people's strengths, can create solutions to these points of the positive psychology approach, which are put into the background, and can work on the strengths of individuals because of their historical and professional background in the field.

The concept of well-being is one of the concepts that positive psychology and psychological counseling work in common. Looking at the literature, Myers [21] argued that, nearly two decades before the positive psychology approach became popular, a wellness approach based on strengths as well as a treatment-oriented approach should be the basic principle of PCR and identified many reasons for this point. Starting from here; The concept of well-being is not a current concept in the field of psychological counseling, it is a concept that has been used by many researchers in the past; It can be said that there is no change of perspective in the field of psychological counseling at the point of well-being, because although treatment is considered important in the origins of the psychological counseling approach, it is aimed to be preventive and to highlight the potential of the client at the starting point of the practices. In addition, this point is like the concept of well-being in many points. Based on all these situations, Myers [21] put forward ideas regarding the importance of the concept of staying well in the field of psychological counseling. In the following process, some of these ideas have been introduced to the field, while others have been studied recently.

The basis of the Psychological Counseling approach is that the clients use their potential power in the face of problems that may arise in life. In this respect, the psychological counseling approach is an area that prioritizes healing, and besides the needs of a group of people with the disease, it is to ensure that most individuals have vital life skills to cope with the tasks that they have difficulty overcoming. From this point of view, regardless of which approach it is, the field of psychological counseling prioritizes taking responsibility in terms of putting individuals' lives in order [22]. Considering that one of the main points of the psychological counseling approach is to highlight the strengths and resources of the individual, to determine the psychological satisfaction levels and contents, and to try to overcome the problems, it can be said that positive psychology and psychological counseling processes are similar [23].

The results of Young & Hutchinson's [18] studies based on the positive psychology approach are related to the field of psychological counseling but are sub-extensions of the psychological counseling approach. In addition, there are disconnections between theory and practice in some positive practices in psychological counseling. When looked at, many ideas have been put forward regarding the emergence process of Positive Psychology. Some of the researchers base the beginning of the process on Martin Seligman's speech in 1999, some researchers state that the starting point is based on the humanistic approach, while others base it on the eudamony-hedonia debates in ancient times. Although the systematic treatment of positive psychology dates to the beginning of the 21st century, it is highly likely that the origins of this approach can be found in different time periods and in the studies of many researchers [17].

The concept of subjective well-being and the concept of psychological well-being are at a different point from each other. The ability of subjective well-being to progress according to the perspective of the individual stands at a different point from clinical psychology and psychological well-being. It is a very important situation that an individual feels about his/her own well-being. Ultimately, this approach has both positive and negative aspects. Although the opinions of the person about herself are important, subjective well-being is not a determining power in expressing the health of the individual, considering the reason, individuals can be sick even if they are happy. On the other hand, the concept of subjective well-being is not like psychological resilience or mental health. For example, a person with obsessions can be happy or get satisfaction from his life. From this point of view, it is not possible to say that the mental health of such an individual is good. Similarly, an individual who is not aware of her feelings may express that she is happy, but this person's psychological resilience cannot be at a strong point. In short, when all these are considered, subjective well-being is not a sufficient criterion for resilience [24].

When we look at the relationship between the concept of Doomscrolling and the Fear of Missing Out, Cambridge Dictionary [25] defines the concept of Fear of Missing Out on social platform applications as a state of anxiety that occurs when individuals are not able to have information about fun and exciting events shared by their friends. In Urban Dictionary [26], the Fear of Missing Out is defined as a kind of anxiety about not being able to have information about a social event or meeting-oriented life, or missing important events shared on social platforms. Similarly, according to Oxford Dictionary [27], Fear of Missing Out is included as the anxiety about missing more interesting or exciting activities that occur on social platforms. On the other hand, Fear of Missing Out was expressed as the thought of not knowing other individuals' social media posts and lifestyles to be seen, and it was stated that Missing Out Grove was related to unhealthy social media use [28]. According to another researcher, Blum [29], this concept is defined as feeling negative emotions because of not being able to see herself in the photos of her friends on social media. From this point of view, we can define the concept of Fear of Missing Out as a fear that arises because of the individual's need to receive information and follow social media constantly. Sapadin [30] stated that the incidence of individuals who have the fear of missing out is high in people who actively use social platforms. When we look at the reason, these people are constantly examining what other people are dealing with and what they are sharing on social platforms. From the perspective of these individuals, while people get hundreds of likes on social platforms, they themselves get much less likes. For this reason, what other people do is always

on their agenda for individuals who have the fear of missing out. Erciş et al. [31], on the other hand, defined the concept of Fear of Missing Out as the anxiety that arises because of the individual not being informed about the important experiences of others. In addition, individuals with a high level of Fear of Missing Out may be more sensitive to the notifications of technological devices.

According to Hodkinson [32], it can be said that the level of Fear of Missing Out is high if the person must pick up the phone the moment a call comes in. The longer the phone rings, the higher the individual's level of Fear of Missing Out. In another example, when a person is invited to an important place, even if they have an important job, they may feel compelled to respond positively because of their high level of Fear of Missing Out. The feeling of "I should not miss the developments" in the individual prevents the person from making wise decisions. At this point, the Fear of Missing Out on Developments causes many ailments. Fear of Missing Out can be defined as a kind of "anxiety disorder" or "unnecessary regret" that has entered our lives in recent years [33]. Fear of Missing Out has become an indispensable part of life with the widespread use of the internet feature of smart devices and the increase in the time spent on social media, and its prevalence in society has increased. Bisping [34] stated that people with a high level of Fear of Missing Out spend more time on social media to reduce their fear. Individuals who act like this can spend a lot of time on social media platforms without realizing it after a point. On the other hand, people who spend time on social media cannot spare time for their close circles. On the other hand, individuals with a high level of Fear of Missing Out feel the need to constantly check their mobile phones while driving. On the other hand, when they attend events such as meetings or parties, they are interested in their phones instead of communicating with the people there.

Individuals with a high level of Fear of Missing Out usually establish relationships with their close circle through social platforms. When we look at the literature, the points that cause the Fear of Missing out on Developments reveal that the individual results from the feeling of belonging to a group. The higher the individual's probability of being in any group, the more likely they will experience the Fear of Missing Out. Wiesner [35] argued that individuals have concerns about losing what they have since their existence. Many opportunities offered by the age of technology to people have led to a change in our communication ways. Thus, we have been able to follow more content, share and information flow about the life of the individual. When the individual cannot get information, they may experience the Fear of Missing Out on Developments.

The issue of whether the Kidnapping Grove is a type of addiction is still being debated today. Some of the researchers have suggested that this concept can be considered as a type of addiction with developing technologies [36-38]. Luna [39] stated that the concept of Fear of Missing Out is an ancient type of

fear, but it has gained importance again in recent years with the forms of communication in social media. As individuals sharing the same society, the sense of belonging and being aware of the events in the society are of great importance. We can be informed about important developments in our society through television, newspapers, internet and social media platforms. Like the results of Karadağ & Akçınar [40] research on individuals who have problems or spend a lot of time on social media, people with a high level of Fear of Missing Out have experienced a traumatic event in the past or obsessively want to keep everything under control. From this point of view, it can be said that these people have a high level of obsessive-compulsive disorder. It can be said that this is one of the important reasons underlying the Fear of Missing Out. It can be argued that another reason underlying the Fear of Missing Out is competition. As the level of Fear of Missing Out on Developments rises, the individual attaches importance to more ostentatious qualities in addition to her material expenditures. The individual can put her economic situation into difficulties and spend more money. Individuals try to reach the highest level with the expenditure they make. These expensive expenditures by individuals and the possession of flashy items can also increase the level of Fear of Missing Out. On the other hand, Kacker & Saurav [41] stated that the level of Fear of Missing Out is not only in those who actively use social media. Individuals with a high level of this fear may feel obligated to follow what the people around them are doing and their posts. The active use of social media by people who communicate with the other party through social media is also an important factor in increasing the Fear of Missing Out. Looking at the studies in the literature, Tarhan [42] stated that because of a study carried out in recent years, the novelty-seeking gene was found in humans. Individuals with this trait are likely to have high levels of Fear of Missing Out. These individuals follow innovations. According to Eriş [43], Fear of Missing Out is a condition that is more common in the 13-33 age group. Stating that the Fear of Missing Out is increasing in societies, the researcher said that the individual who has the fear of Missing out on Developments performs an obsessive behavior because of not wanting to be left behind from something.

Holte & Ferraro [44] conducted a study with 450 individuals in the USA, and it was revealed that the fear of missing out was directly related to anxiety, anxiety and distress. In a study conducted by Kartol & Peker [45] on high school students studying in Turkey, it was revealed that there is a moderate relationship between Fear of Missing Out and anxiety and anxiety. In another study [46], it was concluded that individuals with a high level of Fear of Missing Out use social media problematically. In addition, the decrease in the functionality of the individuals participating in the study in their daily life is associated with the Fear of Missing Out. The same researchers [28] performed another study they conducted on 3370 participants. In the study, the relationship between the level of Fear of Missing Out and the big five personality traits, age and gender was examined. Considering the results of the

study it was concluded that there was no significant relationship between the level of Fear of Missing Out and the gender variable. It has been observed that the level of Fear of Missing Out is higher in younger people. While the level of Fear of Missing Out has a positive relationship with neuroticism, it has been concluded that it has a negative relationship with extraversion, agreeableness and responsibility traits.

Another related concept with the Fear of Missing Out is the state of being a sociotelist. Another negative effect of the intensive use of smart devices, which affect human life with problems such as addiction, behavioral disorders, and insomnia, is sociotelism [47,48]. Sociothelism is when at least one of the two people who are in face-to-face communication is interested in their smart device [49] and takes their perception away from bilateral communication [50]. In other words, sociotelism is when people who share the same environment are interested in their phones rather than bilateral communication, and therefore communication is broken [51]. As a sub-type of phone addiction, sociotelism [48] is fused with other addiction types such as game addiction, nomophobia, and internet addiction [48,50]. Looking at the literature, sociotelism, which is a new concept, is considered as a more dangerous addiction than previous addictions and can cause anxiety and mental problems [50,52]. From this point of view, it is important to know the concept of sociotelism and the concepts related to sociotelism [53].

A Brief Inference

Doomscrolling is one of the current concepts used in literature in recent years. It can be said that it is one of the main variables in the studies to be conducted on social media and internet addiction. Another point is that it is a concept closely related to the well-being of individuals. From this point of view, it is thought that it is important to consider the concept of doomscrolling together with different variables and to carry out scale development or adaptation studies in literature. Finally, considering that the concept of doomscrolling is closely related to the well-being of the individual, it is thought that studies to be carried out on the axis of positive psychology are important. In this context, it is thought that studies with happiness and doomscrolling variables will contribute to the literature.

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