

Doomscrolling as Cyberloafing in the Workplace: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract. *Introduction* Doomscrolling represents a harmful form of digital behavior that must be identified and mitigated. However, the literature on doomscrolling remains fragmented across multiple disciplines.

Aim Exploration of the primary determinant factors of doomscrolling behaviors, their impact on employees, and suggested internal controls to mitigate the behavior, through Systematic literature reviews using PRISMA Guidelines.

Result The findings reveal that coping mechanisms and FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) are the most significant factors of cyberloafing and doomscrolling behavior. The findings demonstrate that while doomscrolling leads to detrimental outcomes such as task avoidance and deprioritization of responsibilities, they concurrently serve as a coping mechanism. Employees frequently resort to digital escapism, such as browsing e-commerce platforms or consuming humorous content, to release stress.

Conclusion Ineffective procedures and a lack of workload fairness may cause employees to engage in mischief behavior. For organizations, it is important to implement control mechanisms to reduce deviant behavior.

Introduction

The value of information has traditionally been derived from its capacity to reduce uncertainty. Yet, contemporary digital environments increasingly challenge this assumption. Across disciplines ranging from information systems to organizational decision-making, access to timely and relevant information has been viewed as a prerequisite for effective judgement and problem-solving (Rieu et al., 2024). However, the contemporary digital information environment increasingly

challenges this long-standing assumption. The unprecedented volume, velocity, and accessibility of online information have created conditions in which information abundance may become a source of cognitive burden rather than a facilitator of effective decision-making (Bawden & Robinson, 2020). Instead of enhancing clarity, excessive exposure to information can overwhelm individuals' cognitive processing capacity, leading to anxiety, confusion, and even burnout that may eventually impair decision quality (Shahrzadi et al., 2024). A survey found that 69% of adults in America cited the spread of false or inaccurate information they found on the internet as a major source of stress (American Psychological Association, 2020). This paradox raises an important question: *"What happens when individuals continue to seek information even when additional information ceases to be beneficial?"*

One increasingly visible answer to this question is doomscrolling, the compulsive and repetitive consumption of negative online information through online platforms (Sharma et al., 2022). Initially associated with pandemic-related information seeking, doomscrolling has evolved into a broader pattern of engagement with adverse content concerning political conflicts, environmental crises, economic instability, and other societal threats (Neijzen, 2024). Equivocally, individuals often engage in doomscrolling to gain certainty and remain well-informed, yet the behavior frequently produces the opposite outcome by reinforcing feelings of uncertainty, distress, and emotional exhaustion (Shabahang et al., 2023; Taskin et al., 2024). Consequently, scholars have increasingly begun to conceptualize doomscrolling not simply as a media consumption habit but as a maladaptive behavioral response to digitally amplified uncertainty.

Doomscrolling may represent a particularly harmful form of digital behavior, especially in contexts where sustained attention and psychological well-being are essential, such as in the workplace. The increasing adoption of remote and hybrid work arrangements has expanded employees' access to digital technologies while simultaneously reducing the separation between work-related and personal digital activities. (Wang et al., 2024). Employees now navigate work tasks within the same

digital environments that provide access to social media, online news, messaging platforms, and other non-work-related content. Inevitably, the workplace has become increasingly vulnerable to forms of digital distraction that compete with work demands for employees' attention and cognitive resources (Hughes et al., 2024). Despite these implications, doomscrolling remains underexplored within organizational and workplace research.

From an organizational perspective, doomscrolling shares important characteristics with cyberloafing. Cyberloafing refers to employees' use of workplace internet access or digital technologies for personal purposes during working hours. (Henle & Kedharnath, 2012). Existing research has identified a wide range of cyberloafing activities, including social networking, entertainment browsing, online shopping, personal communication, and other non-work-related internet use. (Akbulut et al., 2017; Dönmez & Akbulut, 2019; Kumar et al., 2025). Traditionally, cyberloafing has been viewed as a form of workplace deviance because it diverts time and attention away from organizational objectives. However, the evolution of digital technologies has expanded the range of cyberloafing behaviors beyond leisure-oriented activities (Dmour et al., 2020). Increasingly, employees engage in information-oriented behaviors that may not appear deviant at first glance but nevertheless interfere with work performance. Doomscrolling exemplifies this emerging category because employees often perceive the behavior as staying informed rather than engaging in personal internet use.

The conceptualization of doomscrolling as cyberloafing is further supported by prior research on the determinants of workplace technology misuse. Studies have shown that cyberloafing is influenced by individual, organizational, and technological factors, including job stress, organizational injustice, emotional states, social influences, perceived overqualification, techno-insecurity, and social media overload (Chiu et al., 2023; Koay et al., 2017; Reizer et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2024). Notably, many of these factors overlap with antecedents identified in doomscrolling research, particularly uncertainty, anxiety, stress, and information overload (Ang,

2025; Kaya & Griffiths, 2025). This overlap suggests that doomscrolling may represent a contemporary manifestation of cyberloafing that is driven less by entertainment motives and more by psychological and informational needs.

Despite increasing scholarly attention to both doomscrolling and cyberloafing, the literature remains fragmented across multiple disciplines. Existing doomscrolling studies primarily focus on psychological antecedents and mental health consequences (Kaya & Griffiths, 2025; Shabahang et al., 2023; Sharma et al., 2022; Taskin et al., 2024). At the same time, cyberloafing research emphasizes workplace predictors, organizational outcomes, and governance mechanisms (Koay et al., 2017; Rahaei & Salehzadeh, 2020; Reizer et al., 2022; Salehzadeh et al., 2020). Consequently, limited efforts have been made to integrate these streams of research to understand doomscrolling as a workplace cyberloafing behavior. This fragmentation restricts current understanding regarding the factors driving doomscrolling, its impact on employees, and the organizational controls that may effectively mitigate its occurrences.

Accordingly, this study conducts a systematic literature review to synthesize the emerging body of knowledge on doomscrolling as a cyberloafing behavior in workplace settings. Specifically, this review addresses three research questions: (1) What are the primary determinant factors driving doomscrolling behavior?; (2) How does doomscrolling affect employees?; and (3) What internal control mechanisms can be implemented to mitigate the behavior?.

Method

In this study, a systematic literature review is employed alongside qualitative content analysis to explore how the trend of publication has evolved, the distribution of codes, and emerging patterns. Descriptive analytics was used to analyze and explain antecedents or underlying factors to answer the research questions.

The study follows the guidelines on how to conduct a systematic literature review. (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007) and the PRISMA framework “Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis Statement 2020”. The

framework was illustrated in Figure 1, which establishes a structured review process in this study.

Search strategy

During the literature search phase, a systematic search string was formulated by combining two primary conceptual clusters of keywords. The first cluster pertained to the targeted IT deviant behaviors, encompassing terms such as doomsscrolling and cyberloafing, while the second cluster focused on the organizational context, targeting terms related to workers and the workplace. Within each respective cluster, synonyms and related terminologies were linked utilizing the Boolean operator 'OR' to maximize search sensitivity. Subsequently, these two clusters were intersected using the Boolean operator 'AND' to strictly guarantee contextual relevance. A baseline representation of the applied search syntax is as follows: "Doomscroll*" OR "cyberloaf*" OR "Problematic social media use" OR "Compulsive news consumption" OR "brows* news" OR "brows* content" OR "Doomsurf*" OR "digital distress" was used as a combination for searching literature about doomsurfing and cyberloafing. "Employee" OR "Worker" OR "Professional" OR "Workplace" was used as a combination for searching literature about workplace and employee. To be considered for inclusion, the identified combination of keywords needed to appear in the title, abstract, or author's keyword fields of a research article.

The search covered all studies between January 2015 and May 2026. Searches were performed on 21-22 May 2026. Additional refinements where that the articles must meet criteria such as English language and journal article as document type. Scopus was chosen as the primary indexing database for its extensive and well-curated repository (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016) and disjointed searches across top-tier publisher database platforms including ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, SAGE Journals, Taylor & Francis, and SpringerLink.

Mitigation of the risk of redundancy extraction from disjointed searches was done by conducting a duplicate removal process using Mendeley Reference Citation Manager Software.

Screening Process

During the initial search phase, the queries resulted in a total of 760 records across multiple databases and publisher platforms, as shown in Figure 1. Given the inherent overlapping coverage between Scopus and other primary publisher repositories, a rigorous deduplication phase was mandated to prevent methodological redundancy, resulting in 374 duplicate records and 386 unique articles.

386 unique articles were retained and advanced to the subsequent screening phase. The screening phase was conducted in two sequential stages: first screening (title and abstract) and secondary screening (full-text and quality evaluation). To ensure methodological rigor, the entire screening and data management workflow was facilitated using the MAXQDA²⁴ qualitative data analysis software. The evaluation relied on the collective judgment of the research team, with any inter-rater discrepancies during the screening process resolved through consensus-based reconciliations.

During the primary screening phase, the titles and abstracts of the retrieved records were independently evaluated to verify their thematic alignment with doomscrolling, cyberloafing, and excessive digital media consumption, specifically within organizational environments or among employee cohorts. This filtering process was computationally facilitated using the lexical and advanced search capabilities of MAXQDA. The software executed complex keyword queries derived from the inclusion criteria (e.g., "doomscroll*" AND "Workplace"). To guarantee contextual validity and methodological rigor, the complete set of predefined inclusion and exclusion parameters is delineated in Table 1.

Table 1.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Published entirely in English Language.	Published in languages other than English.
Possessing a central thematic focus on doomscrolling, cyberloafing, or related IT deviant behaviors.	Examining non-organizational demographic groups (e.g., university students or the general public).
Empirically contextualized within the workplace or specifically targeting employee populations.	Lacking substantive empirical discussion on the antecedents or influencing factors driving these behavioral phenomena.

The primary screening phase resulted in 73 eligible articles that successfully met the inclusion criteria. The remaining records were systematically excluded based on incomplete retrieval of the abstract (176 articles), thematic misalignment (82 articles), contextual misalignment (23 articles), and missing antecedents (32 articles).

Following the primary evaluation, the full-text PDF of the selected studies was sought for retrieval. Successfully retrieved manuscripts subsequently underwent the secondary screening phase.

The secondary screening evaluated whether the studies addressed the influencing factors driving these Information Technology deviant behaviors among workers or individuals in the workplace. Quality evaluation of selected papers used JBI critical appraisal.

Following the secondary screening evaluation, only 12 articles were ultimately retained for the final data synthesis and risk of bias assessment. The remaining 61 manuscripts were excluded during this secondary screening phase due to several critical deviations that are shown in Figure 1.

Risk of Bias Assessment

Risk of bias was assessed using the Joana Briggs Institute (JBI) Critical Appraisal Checklist for Analytical Cross-Sectional Studies and Qualitative Research. (JBI, 2017; Moola et al., 2017). This study was inspired by JBI's adaptation of a systematic literature review conducted by Güner (2026). Each cross-sectional study was evaluated by eight questions. However, qualitative studies were assessed by 10 parameters. Risk of bias was evaluated by calculating the ratio of met criteria ('Yes' responses) to the total number of applicable items, yielding a percentage score. Studies were subsequently categorized as having a low (80%–100%), moderate (50%–79%), or high (<50%) risk of bias.

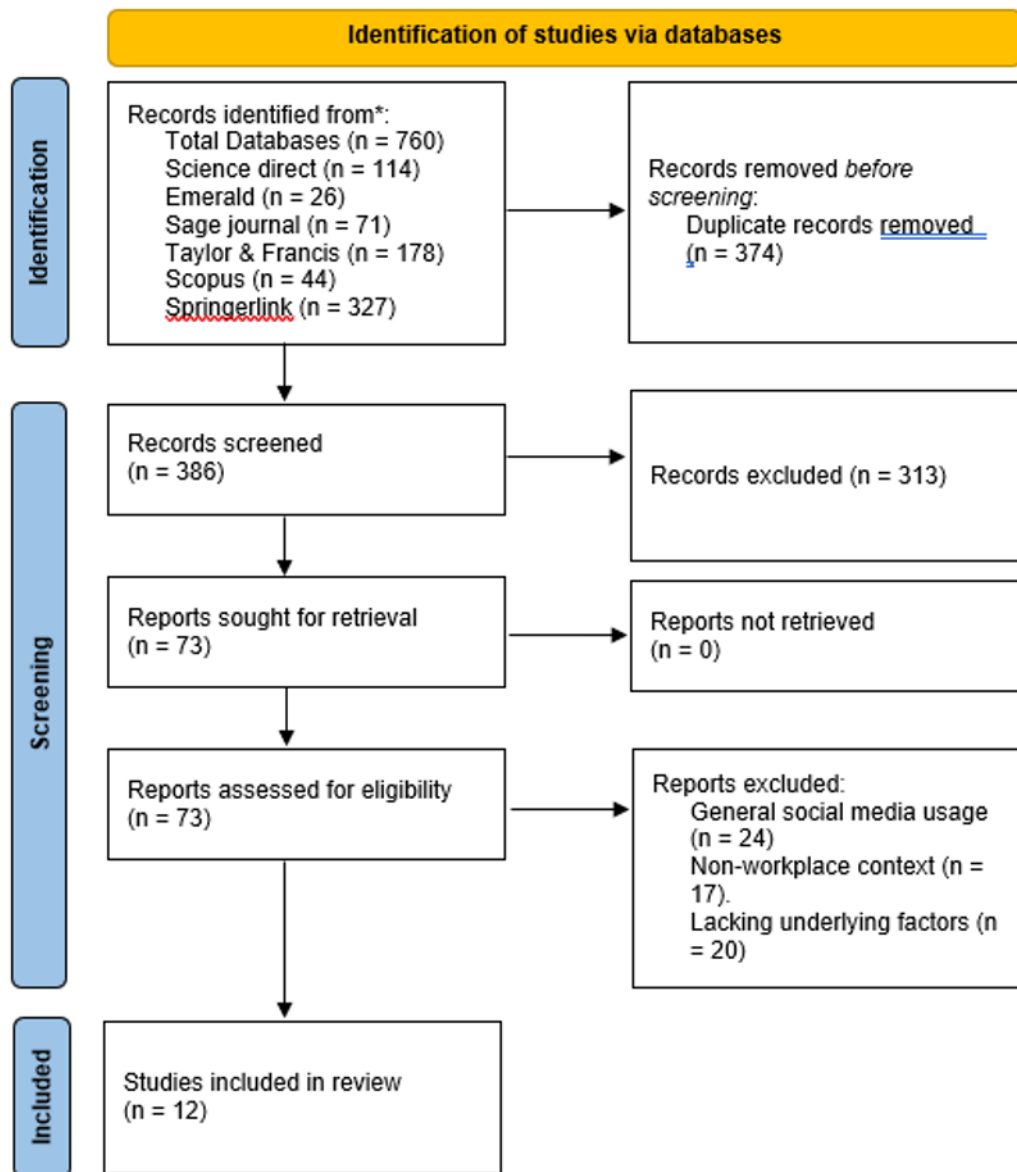


Figure 1. Prisma framework

Data extraction and synthesis

The execution of the data synthesis stage utilized a systematic coding paradigm. Initially, open codes were generated by extracting representative empirical evidence from the findings, discussion, and conclusion sections. The open codes were iteratively abstracted into axial codes as higher-order categories to reduce semantic overlapping. The final phase was selective coding that summarized and identified core themes that directly address the research questions. The entire coding protocol

was independently performed by the researchers to mitigate researcher bias. Any inter-coder discrepancies were reviewed and reconciled through a consensus mechanism.

This study employed a systematic literature review supported by MAXQDA24 that enables researchers to conduct well-documented data analysis, create insightful visualizations, and assess inter-rater reliability.

Result

A total of twelve studies met the inclusion criteria. Cross-sectional studies were conducted in Turkiye (n = 1), Iran (n = 1), Malaysia (n = 1), China (n = 4), Japan (n = 1), Australia (n = 1), and the United States (n = 2). Sample sizes ranged from 48 to 996 employees. One qualitative study conducted interviews with 21 employees in India (n = 1). A detailed summary of study features, their codes, and analysis of risk of bias was presented in Table 2.

Analysis of risk of bias stated that 9 (nine) papers were categorized as low risk. 2 (two) papers were categorized as moderate because there were confounding factors that affect the analysis process. One paper was categorized as moderate because of the existence of the researcher's influence on the studies.

The analysis yielded 14 (fourteen) distinct open codes delineating the antecedents of cyberloafing and doomscrolling among individuals in the workplace. The two most frequently occurring codes are *coping mechanism* and FOMO, with each of them in 4 (four) articles and 6 (six) articles. Axial coding categorized the open codes into three group codes: (1) Information Technology (IT) Factors; (2) Behavioral Factors; (3) Organizational Factors which were inspired by the Theory of Psychological Ownership. A comprehensive delineation of this taxonomic aggregation is presented in Table 3.

Table 2.

Axial – Open coding tabulation

Axial Codes	Open codes	Frequency
Information technology	Information overload	2 articles
	Communication overload	2 articles
	Use of technology	1 article
Behavioral factor	Interpersonal relationship	1 article
	Coping mechanism	6 articles
	FOMO	4 articles
Organizational factor	Presence of formal rules	2 articles
	Perceived organizational justice	1 article
	Supervisor support	1 article

Another finding was the impact of cyberloafing and doomscrolling on employee performance, as shown in Figure 2. The analysis resulted in 4 (four) effects, with work performance and emotional exhaustion as the most frequently occurring. Another finding was a suggestion from selected literature to control and mitigate doomscrolling and cyberloafing, as shown in Figure 3. There were three main controls that consist of enforcing internet usage policies, stimulating employee classification by personal approach, and morality evaluation before the employee does their task. However, only 3 (three) papers mentioned on how companies must mitigate deviant behavior.

Table 3.

Primary studies for SLR

Code	Title	Sample / Country	Key Findings	Risk of Bias
Paper 1	Cyberloafing and social desirability bias among students and employees	996 Jobholders / Turkiye	Social desirability, gender, and social desirability	Low Risk
Paper 2	Do employees' private demands lead to cyberloafing? The mediating role of job stress	201 Employees / Malaysia	Private demands and job stress	Moderate Risk
Paper 3	Do you feel like being proactive today? How Daily Cyberloafing Influences Creativity and Proactive Behavior: The Moderating Roles of Work Environment	91 Full-time / China	Creativity, proactive behavior, informal interaction, and workplace environment	Low Risk
Paper 4	Does perceived overqualification lead to cyberloafing? A moderated-mediation model based on social cognitive theory	740 Employees / China	POQ, moral disengagement, OID	Low Risk
Paper 5	Evaluating the impact of psychological entitlement on cyberloafing: the mediating role of perceived organizational justice	226 Employees / Iran	Psychological entitlement, perceived organizational justice	Moderate Risk
Paper 6	Excessive use of personal social media at work: antecedents and outcomes from dual-system and person-environment fit perspectives	48 Employees / China	Habit and self-regulation	Low Risk
Paper 7	Psychological and behavioral outcomes of social media-induced fear of missing out at the workplace	312 Workers / United States	Individual tendencies, Fear of Missing Out, Individual-level psychological, and behavioral	Low Risk

Paper 8	Push-pull factors and means-end chain framework of cyberloafing: a soft laddering study using LadderUX	21 Employees / India	Upholding conversational conformity, achieving efficiency through noise cancellation, addressing occasional requirements, social networking, coping mechanism	Moderate Risk
Paper 9	Rethinking social media and mental health: The role of emotion regulation difficulties	548 Adults / Australia	Difficulties in emotion regulation, depression, and anxiety	Low Risk
Paper 10	Social media induced fear of missing out (FoMO) and phubbing: Behavioral, relational and psychological outcomes	245 Professionals / United States	FoMO and Creativity	Low Risk
Paper 11	Social media overload and proactive-reactive innovation behavior: A TTSC framework perspective	406 Employees / China	Communication overload and emotional exhaustion	Low Risk
Paper 12	The influence of interpersonal relationships on cyberloafing during remote work	190 Adults / Japan	Perceived supervisor's and coworkers' cyberloafing, family life satisfaction	Low Risk

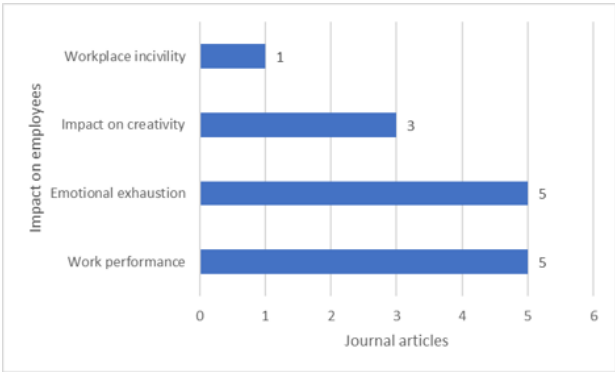


Figure 2. Distribution of impact on employee

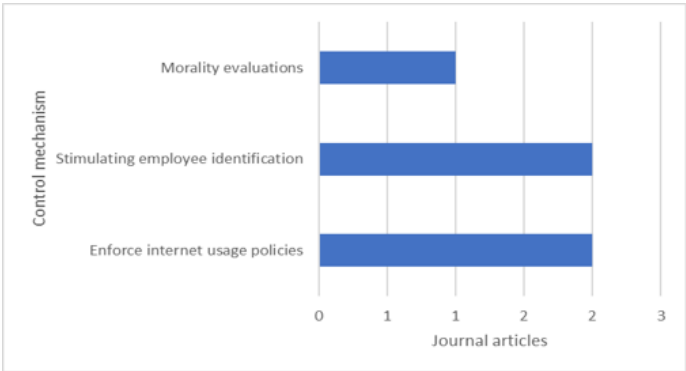


Figure 3. Distribution of control mechanism

Discussion

IT Antecedents

The analysis revealed that several emergent open codes were categorized into information Technology (IT) factors. These factors explained the phenomenon of several IT-specific drivers that consistently contribute to deviant behavior and counterproductive work behavior, such as techno-insecurity (Chiu et al., 2023), fear of missing out (Pirkkalainen et al., 2021), and information technology addiction (Karmakar, 2020). IT antecedents consist of information overload, communication overload, and use of technology that potentially influence employees and individuals in the workplace to engage in cyberloafing and doomscrolling.

Technology and social media advancement allow employees to access online platforms while phubbing (Gao & Zhao, 2024; Tandon et al., 2022). A lot of information is available with high volume and variety at high velocity through access to online platforms such as social media platforms or search engines (Tandon et al., 2022). Employees also experience social media overload since they devote their time, energy, and other resources to accessing social media while working on their tasks (Gao & Zhao, 2024). This finding was moderated by the digital fluency of the employee, and post-pandemic factors enhance employee behavior to search and obtain important information more quickly among a jumble of information.

Advancements in technology also allow employee to connect and communicate (Batabyal & Bhal, 2022; Gao & Zhao, 2024). Employees are continuously interrupted during their work tasks by excessive communication demands and social requests from social media platforms (Gao & Zhao, 2024). Communication and social overload are related to both personal and work purposes, for example, answering questions from the supervisor or checking notifications from social media. Tech-savvy people choose the option for staying updated on current affairs or information through news portals, apps, and social media platforms. It makes sense because the employee orientation is to stay curious and informed, driven by a self-direction value orientation. The social and communication overload requires time, attention, energy, and other resources more than the employee can provide.

Behavior Antecedents

IT Deviant behavior refers to the misuse of technology, such as security violations, cyberbullying, cyberslacking, and digital piracy, which is influenced by individual psychological and behavioral drivers. Behavioral antecedents consist of the interpersonal relationship factor, the coping mechanism factor, and the FOMO factor.

Interpersonal relationships are associated with private life satisfaction. Family satisfaction in the private life of employees was associated with cyberloafing (Agata et al., 2026). Behaviors such as online shopping, exaggerated scrolling through social media, and more severe forms such as online gambling have been shown as a coping response to interpersonal stressors that come from private life and family situation.

The “escape realities” in interpersonal relationships that are found in coping mechanism code can be defined as the behavioral efforts individuals use to manage, reduce, or tolerate stressors and responses to insufficient mental resources (Biggs, 2024; Wang et al., 2024). Higher levels of job stress can be caused by high intensity of private demands, which lead the employee to use the internet at work for personal purposes to cope with stress (Koay et al., 2017). Another source of stress was the monotony of routine jobs and a lack of a clear career trajectory. Employees also use

social media to regulate distressing states as a coping mechanism, such as creating attractive content with the expectation of engagement and support for their emotions (Brown et al., 2026). This behavior can be seen as a maladaptive strategy to seek validation and discharge emotional discomfort. The behavior itself can be seen as an act of escape from boredom (Batabyal & Bhal, 2022). Employees visit social media feeds for updates on their relatives and find humorous content of varied types, which is seen as a zone of entertainment or a moment of respite during boredom at the office.

Psychological entitlement and Perceived Overqualification (POQ) can explain the justification of employees to cyberloafing and doomscrolling as a reaction to their job stress, workload, working time, and their effort to finish the job (Akbulut et al., 2017; Rahaei & Salehzadeh, 2020). In the psychological entitlement realm, the employee feels that they deserve more pay, recognition, and positive feedback for their productive actions (Akbulut et al., 2017; Rahaei & Salehzadeh, 2020). POQ occurs when employees perceive themselves as working in jobs that demand qualifications less than they possess (Wang et al., 2024). The situation itself often arises when a business organization has fewer positions matching applicants' high qualifications. Cyberloafing and misbehavior in workplace activities are their justification. Psychological entitlement and POQ potentially have negative effects such as aggression, greediness, non-ethical behavior, and conflicts with each other (Rahaei & Salehzadeh, 2020). Employees tend to exhibit counterproductive behaviors such as reduced work engagement and moral disengagement, which leads to cyberloafing during work (Wang et al., 2024).

Fear of Missing Out can be defined as a pervasive social-emotional anxiety rooted in concern about missing rewarding experiences, information, or opportunities (He et al., 2024; Takács & Seregély, 2025). Employees as social media users have tendencies to remain actively updated with social media communication due to several factors. First, push notifications or online prompts from social media, online chat, and online shopping trigger an employee or individual at the workplace to check their application on their smartphone (Batabyal & Bhal, 2022). Employees

check the urgency and respond to the notification rather than considering the workload at that moment because of a sense of responsibility and compliance with unwritten social rules (Batabyal & Bhal, 2022). Second, exhibitionism and voyeurism influence their FOMO behavior to stay up to date on social media platforms. Exhibitionism is related to an individual's desire to seek more attention or appreciation from others (Islam et al., 2018). Voyeurism itself can be defined as an act of using social media for online information-seeking (Frampton & Fox, 2021). Third, employees have more tendencies to show off than the desire to know about other employees (Tandon et al., 2021). Activities like posting and commenting on other posts are more desired rather than online information-seeking and passive social media surveillance

Organization Antecedent

Organizations with high information technology demands often push employees toward problematic or compulsive IT use (Zhang et al., 2023). Presence of formal rules, perceived organizational justice, and supervisor support are identified factors that are categorized into organization factors in this study.

Perceived organizational justice can be defined as the fairness level of the organization (Hung et al., 2025; Xu et al., 2020). Interestingly, employees would cyberloaf when the organization treats them unfairly in terms of workload distribution, standard of procedures, and reward mechanism (Rahaei & Salehzadeh, 2020). When employee compare their workload and reward with others, their level of motivation is reduced, and they seek more rest to moderate the unjust condition. Several factors influence the perceived organizational justice, such as ineffective organizational procedures (Rahaei & Salehzadeh, 2020), psychological entitlement (Rahaei & Salehzadeh, 2020), and interactional justice (Eberlin & Tatum, 2008). Interactional justice happens when there's interaction or relationships between individual and organizational behavior accompanied by respect (Rahaei & Salehzadeh, 2020). Subsequent deviant behavior is influenced by conflict and negative relationships between employees. Psychological entitlement means that

individuals feel that they deserve more pay, recognition, positive feedback, and rewards than others without considering their share at an organization (Rahaei & Salehzadeh, 2020). Ineffective organizational procedures can also refer to the fairness of methods used for determining workload and job tasks.

Another influencing factor is the presence of formal internet-use rules. The formal rules were made to reduce cyberloafing actions in the workplace. However, employees rely more on descriptive norms or their interpretation of others' behavior (Batabyal & Bhal, 2022). Employees seek more justification of cyberloafing because other coworkers and supervisors are expected to do cyberloafing and doomscrolling while working (Agata et al., 2026).

The existence of supervisors also doesn't have any influence in reducing deviant behavior in remote work conditions (Agata et al., 2026). But, interestingly, the supervisor effect to reduce deviant behavior is effective in the office environment because the direct legitimacy and higher hierarchical status from the supervisor strongly influence individual behavior.

Impact of Doomscrolling and Cyberloafing on Employees

Evidence drawn from retrieved studies shows inconsistent and contradictory effects of deviant or counterproductive workplace behavior on employee performance. For example, several studies state that cyberloafing and doomscrolling have a negative effect on work performance, such as negative responses and technostress as an impact of exaggerated social media usage. But other studies stated that cyberloafing is an act of recovery from boring and tiresome workload.

The contradictory impacts of deviant behavior can be seen in work performance. Employee use their device and the data network during work hours (Akbulut et al., 2017), which affects technological distraction (Tandon et al., 2021) and technostress (Yu et al., 2022). Another negative effect was social media addiction, which caused information overload and limited the employee's capacity to absorb the information. Information overload, technological distraction, and technostress result

in reduced work performance through reduced work efficiency, both decisional and action.

However, cyberloafing at work potentially helps individuals achieve resource recovery (Tsai, 2023). Diverting one's attention in cyberloafing has the effect of recovering and replenishing personal resources by means of relaxation. The activities themselves can be seen as temporarily detaching employees from stressful and demanding work conditions, as micro-breaks at work allow one to achieve resource recovery and benefit subsequent job performance (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

Viewed through the lens of Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, cyberloafing can be understood as a coping mechanism designed to mitigate the vulnerability of diminished personal resources and prevent a subsequent loss spiral. Cyberloafing through browsing news or sports news as relaxation activities is identified by Tsai (2023) as a form of digital escapism – a short-term strategy to recover energy depleted by occupational stress and to attain positive emotional stimulation. This temporary replenishment of resources paradoxically allows cyberloafing to foster subsequent employee creativity. Nevertheless, despite providing transient relief, excessive cyberloafing through news media and doomscrolling false news ultimately culminates in task procrastination and severe long-term resource depletion. Consequently, Tsai (2023) posits that a flexible work environment capable of facilitating positive interpersonal interaction is more effective against stress. Such a high-quality environment empowers employees to confront and resolve workplace challenges collaboratively rather than resorting to digital avoidance.

A notable paradox regarding doomscrolling and cyberloafing behaviors lies in their contradictory impacts on employee creativity. On one hand, Tandon et al. (2022) highlight that doomscrolling, driven by the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), exerts a significant negative effect on creativity due to cognitive preoccupation. In this scenario, employees exhaust critical cognitive resources—namely time and mental energy—to satisfy FOMO-driven urges, leaving them depleted. Conversely, two

studies posit that cyberloafing can potentially stimulate intrinsic work motivation and replenish the external knowledge and skills requisite for innovative output (Batabyal & Bhal, 2022; Tsai, 2023). However, this beneficial transmutation is highly contingent upon the organizational context. It necessitates a high-quality physical workspace, regulatory leniency, and a climate that fosters organic interpersonal interactions. Within such supportive environments, the spatial and regulatory flexibility allows employees to temporarily disengage and cyberloaf, functioning as a conducive micro-break that ultimately catalyzes the creative process (Tsai, 2023).

The behavior negatively and positively impacts the emotional exhaustion of employees. On the negative side, employees as social media users would feel higher anxiety in different kinds of feelings (Brown et al., 2026; Gao & Zhao, 2024; Tandon et al., 2021, 2022). Employees may feel anxiety because they are not continually updated on their social media platform, which triggers FOMO and a high frequency of access to their personal accounts during work hours. Social media exaggerated usage often contributes to depression when employees have difficulty regulating their emotions (Brown et al., 2026). On the other hand, cyberloafing as an act of escape from reality becomes a treatment to reduce anxiety and stress from the workplace (Batabyal & Bhal, 2022; Brown et al., 2026). The employee regains energy in a passive manner (Batabyal & Bhal, 2022). Interestingly, FOMO was unrelated to workplace exhaustion because social media has become ingrained in the employee's daily life and exponential usage of social media after the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown (Tandon et al., 2022).

Doomscrolling and cyberloafing are sometimes seen as rude and uncivil behavior (Al-Saggaf & O'Donnell, 2019; Tandon et al., 2022). Smartphone usage for accessing and scrolling social media demand attentiveness equivalent to real-life interactions, which causes individuals to be perceived as uncivil in real-life interactions. Paper 10 found that fear of missing out (FOMO) may drive employees

to focus their attention more on keeping abreast of updates and push-up notifications rather than on work-related efforts (Tandon et al., 2022).

Control Mechanism of Doomscrolling

Social institutions and practices facilitate specific actions or behaviors within a community, such as informal mechanisms, moral evaluations, and enforcing internet usage policies as mechanisms to reduce and control doomscrolling.

Informal organizational mechanisms primarily manifest through interpersonal communication and the cultivation of a supportive work environment. Evidence suggests that robust interpersonal interactions, when embedded within a positive organizational climate, effectively buffer the detrimental impacts of excessive doomscrolling. Furthermore, these informal mechanisms empower employees to adopt approach-focused coping strategies—confronting workplace challenges directly—thereby minimizing their reliance on maladaptive digital avoidance in cyberspace.

Interpersonal communication with managers is kept quite active in work-based settings, which might have prevented the employee from cyberloafing and doomscrolling in the workplace (Akbulut et al., 2017). This communication can be formed as stimulation about the organization's vision and promising future of the organization which diminishes the influence of Perceived Overqualification (Wang et al., 2024). The higher the employee's consciousness in the organization, the more individual control over doomscrolling.

The cultivation of a positive and flexible work environment emerged in this study as a pivotal informal control mechanism. The relaxation of stringent workplace regulations—specifically, allowing employees designated, uninterrupted personal time during work hours to replenish personal resources depleted by occupational demands—has been shown to positively influence stress mitigation and enhance overall productivity (Koay et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2024). Furthermore, fostering a positive climate that facilitates organic interpersonal interactions through designated communal spaces, such as game rooms or common lounges, effectively buffers the

adverse impacts of digital escapism via doomscrolling. This spatial and cultural flexibility ensures that employees are equipped to engage in collaborative problem-solving rather than resorting to solitary digital avoidance (Tsai, 2023).

Morality evaluations during the recruitment process as another control mechanism potentially reduce moral disengagement (Wang et al., 2024). First steps is identification of susceptible employees with moral disengagement and tendencies to exaggerate doomscrolling. Then, organizations implement training programs, foster ethical behavior at work, and therapeutic approaches as another prevention mechanism. Therapeutic approaches like dialectical behavior therapy, acceptance and commitment therapy, and mindfulness-based interventions may be effective in addressing disengagement problems during “digital-escapism”. Interventions to help individuals gain more emotional awareness in a digital context could harm their emotional states (Brown et al., 2026).

Lastly, the mechanism is enforcing internet usage policies. Developing a comprehensive ethics on how to use the internet in the workplace and taking corrective actions against deviant behavior are essential control mechanisms in the workplace. The organization conducts restricted access and blocks several websites on the blacklist and implements a security system to monitor internet activities (Akbulut et al., 2017). The policies themselves must contain punishments such as issuing a warning letter for employees (Koay et al., 2017). However, tolerance in the policies must be considered in certain circumstances requiring them to respond to urgent private demands, such as texting their spouse to pick up their kids.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this systematic literature review is to explore the antecedents, impacts, and mitigation concerning doomscrolling as cyberloafing behavior within the workplace. The findings highlight that communication overload and ubiquitous use of technology significantly drive employees toward digital escapism, with Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and the need for coping mechanisms serving as the most influential behavior antecedents. These results underscore the

phenomenon of doomscrolling as a maladaptive coping response to interpersonal and occupational stressors in the workplace. Furthermore, the synthesis reveals that organizational deficiencies, such as ineffective administrative procedures, perceived inequity in workload distribution, and poor interpersonal communication, often lead employees to act on certain IT deviant behavior to justify the condition.

Crucially, regarding the impact on employee performance, regarding the impact on employee, this study synthesizes a paradoxical relationship rather than a mere inconsistency in the selected literature. While uncontrollable doomscrolling and cyberloafing decrease routine task efficiency and prompt severe long-term resource depletion, they can simultaneously function as a short-term stress release through detachment and digital escapism. When situated within a supportive, high-quality, and flexible work environment, temporary digital detachment allows employees to achieve short-term resource recovery, which paradoxically fosters subsequent creativity and proactive problem-solving in complex tasks.

Finally, this study delineates a multidimensional approach to managing these behaviors. Rather than relying solely on structural procedures and mechanism controls (e.g., enforcing internet usage policies and issuing warning letters), the organization must cultivate a supportive psychological environment, foster interpersonal communication, and conduct moral alignment evaluation.

Suggestion

Although this review provides a comprehensive and structured synthesis of the literature on cyberloafing and doomscrolling among workers or individuals at the workplace, this study only explored literature published in the last decade between 2015 and 2026 to capture doomscrolling and cyberloafing in the modern digital era. However, this time limit ignores studies from the early internet era (the early 2000s), which may provide a different perspective on how digital distractions first affected work productivity. Another limitation is that the evidence is largely derived from Asian countries, whereas data from Europe and the Latin region remain limited, constraining the generalizability of the findings.

To advance the field, particularly from a psychological and organizational behavior perspective, future research must pivot toward investigating the underlying psychological mechanism using dynamic, time-sensitive methodologies. Specifically, scholars are strongly encouraged to employ a longitudinal design or the Experience Sampling Method (ESM). Such approaches would enable the real-time tracking of employees' emotional fluctuations, cognitive fatigue, and resource depletion before, during, and immediately after doomscrolling or cyberloafing. Furthermore, integrating mixed-method approaches could significantly enrich the validity of these behavioral findings. Finally, future studies should empirically evaluate the psychological efficacy of existing organizational control mechanisms, assessing how formal and informal interventions mitigate the negative psychological effects of digital escapism.

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Author contribution

Vecco Suryahadi designed the workflow of the study, prepared the methodology based on the PRISMA Checklist, and conducted the analysis. Larasati Sugianto contributed as a second analyst who read and analyzed selected studies. Saskia Salmana contributed as a writer and proofreader of the manuscript before submission. Adisti Gemilang helped as a third analyst who analyzed and coded the selected studies. Said Aryonindito helped to conduct Fleiss Kappa and intercoder agreement analysis of codes.

Competing interest

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