

Original Article

Impact of Social Media on Athletes' Mental Health and Sports Performance: Emerging Challenges in Modern Sports

Dr. Dhananjay Shamsundar Sirsat

Assistant Professor, School of Education Sciences,
Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University, Nanded, Maharashtra.

Manuscript ID:

yrj-150307

ISSN: 2277-7911

Impact Factor – 7.025

Volume 15

Issue 3

July-Aug-Sept.- 2026

Pp. 70 - 73

Submitted: 18 July 2026

Revised: 30 July 2026

Accepted: 1 Aug. 2026

Published: 10 Aug. 2026

Corresponding Author:

Dr. Dhananjay

Shamsundar Sirsat

Quick Response Code:



Web. <https://yra.ijaar.co.in/>



DOI:

10.5281/zenodo.23472903

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23472903>



Creative Commons



Abstract:

Social media has become an important part of modern sports, influencing how athletes communicate, build their public image, interact with supporters, and receive information. Digital platforms provide opportunities for personal branding, sponsorship, professional networking, and sports promotion. However, excessive social media use may expose athletes to online criticism, negative comparisons, performance pressure, and cyberbullying. These experiences may affect psychological well-being, concentration, confidence, and preparation for competition. This article examines the potential benefits and challenges of social media use among athletes, with particular attention to mental health and sporting performance. It discusses the responsibilities of athletes, coaches, sports organisations, and educational institutions in promoting healthy digital habits. The article argues that digital literacy and psychological support should become important components of contemporary sports education.

Keywords: Social Media, Athletes, Mental Health, Sports Performance, Digital Literacy, Sports Psychology, Cyberbullying.

Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0), which permits others to remix, adapt, and build upon the work non-commercially, provided that appropriate credit is given and that any new creations are licensed under identical terms.

How to cite this article:

Dr. Dhananjay Shamsundar Sirsat (2026). Impact of Social Media on Athletes' Mental Health and Sports Performance: Emerging Challenges in Modern Sports. Young Researcher, 15(3), 70 – 73.

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23472903>

Introduction:

The development of digital technology has significantly changed the sporting environment. Athletes can now communicate

directly with supporters, share training experiences, promote competitions, and build professional identities through social media platforms. Social media has also changed the

way sports news is distributed and consumed. Athletes who previously depended largely on traditional media can now communicate directly with audiences and organisations. Despite these advantages, digital platforms create new challenges. Athletes may face public criticism after poor performances, pressure to maintain a positive online image, and constant comparisons with competitors. For some athletes, these experiences may contribute to stress or distraction. Understanding the relationship between social media, psychological well-being, and sports performance is therefore increasingly relevant to sports psychology and physical education.

Positive Role of Social Media in Sports:

Social media offers several opportunities for athletes and sporting organisations.

1. Professional Visibility:

Athletes can showcase their achievements, training experiences, and competition results. This visibility may help them connect with coaches, clubs, sponsors, and sports organisations.

2. Communication and Networking:

Digital platforms allow athletes to communicate with teammates, coaches, supporters, and other professionals. They can also access educational resources and information about sporting opportunities.

3. Promotion of Sports:

Social media can help promote lesser-known sports and increase awareness of local competitions. In India, it may provide greater visibility to athletes participating in kabaddi, kho-kho, wrestling, athletics, and other disciplines.

4. Educational Opportunities:

Athletes and students can access instructional videos, fitness information, and discussions about sports science. However, information should be evaluated carefully because not all online content is scientifically reliable.

Psychological Challenges Associated with Social Media:

1. Performance Pressure:

Athletes may feel pressure to present themselves as successful at all times. Negative comments following a defeat can add to the emotional demands of competition.

2. Social Comparison:

Constant exposure to the achievements and lifestyles of other athletes may encourage unrealistic comparisons. Such comparisons can affect self-confidence in some individuals.

3. Cyberbullying and Online Abuse:

Athletes may encounter abusive comments, harassment, or threats. These experiences can create psychological distress and may require support from sports organisations and mental health professionals.

4. Distraction During Training:

Frequent notifications and excessive screen time may interrupt concentration, interfere with recovery routines, or displace time intended for sleep and physical preparation.

It is important to recognise that these outcomes are not inevitable. The effects of social media depend on individual circumstances, patterns of use, personal coping strategies, and the surrounding social environment.

Social Media and Sports Performance:

Athletic performance depends on physical preparation, technical ability, tactical understanding, recovery, and psychological readiness. Social media may support performance when athletes use it to access relevant educational content, communicate effectively, and build supportive professional networks. Conversely, online conflict, harassment, or excessive engagement may become a source of distraction. Athletes may benefit from setting boundaries around social media use, particularly before important competitions. Coaches should avoid assuming that all athletes respond to social media in the same way. Individual guidance is more appropriate than imposing identical restrictions on every athlete.

Role of Coaches and Sports Organisations:

Coaches and sports administrators should help athletes develop responsible digital habits.

Practical measures include:

- Providing digital literacy education.
- Discussing online privacy and personal reputation.
- Establishing procedures for reporting cyberbullying.
- Encouraging athletes to set boundaries around screen time.
- Providing access to psychological support when necessary.
- Promoting respectful communication among athletes and supporters.

Sports organisations should also develop clear policies addressing online abuse and the protection of athletes' personal information.

Recommendations for Physical Education Institutions:

Universities and sports academies can incorporate digital well-being into sports psychology and physical education programmes. Students should learn to distinguish reliable sports science information from misleading online advice. They should also understand how online comparison, harassment, and excessive screen time may affect well-being. Future research could examine social media use, sleep quality, competitive anxiety, self-confidence, and training concentration among university athletes in India. Longitudinal studies would be particularly useful for understanding how patterns of social media engagement relate to changes in psychological well-being over time.

Conclusion:

Social media has created valuable opportunities for communication, professional visibility, and sports promotion. At the same time, it may expose athletes to online criticism, social comparison, and distraction. A balanced approach is therefore necessary. Athletes should be encouraged to use digital platforms purposefully while protecting their privacy, psychological well-being, and preparation routines. Physical education teachers, coaches, and sports organisations have an important role in developing digital literacy and supportive sporting environments.

The challenge for modern sports is not to eliminate social media, but to ensure that technology supports athletes rather than becoming a source of unnecessary pressure.

References:

1. World Health Organization. (2022). World Mental Health Report: Transforming Mental Health for All. Geneva: WHO.
2. International Olympic Committee. (2019). Mental Health in Elite Athletes: International Olympic Committee Consensus Statement. British Journal of Sports Medicine.
3. Kowalski, R. M., Giumetti, G. W., Schroeder, A. N., & Lattanner, M. R. (2014). Bullying in the digital age: A critical review and meta-analysis of cyberbullying research among youth. *Psychological Bulletin*, 140(4), 1073–1137.