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**EXTENDED
ABSTRACT**

Exploring the Impact of Social Media Engagement on the Psychological Well-Being of Youth Athletes

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I. INTRODUCTION

Youth athletes increasingly rely on social media for connection, support, and self-promotion, yet its psychological impact remains poorly understood. While engagement can foster motivation and peer interaction, excessive or passive use heightens stress, anxiety, and self-esteem issues. Youth athletes face unique vulnerabilities due to performance pressures and idealized online portrayals [1][2]. This study explores engagement patterns, content consumption, and their relationship to psychological well-being, addressing a critical gap in sports psychology research.

II. METHODS

A total of 80 youth athletes, aged 16–25, who actively participate in competitive sports and regularly use social media, were recruited through purposive sampling. Data were collected using an online structured survey. Social media engagement was measured with an adapted Social Media Engagement Scale for Adolescents (SMES-A), while psychological well-being was assessed using three validated scales: Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7) for anxiety, Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) for depression, and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) for self-esteem. Descriptive statistics identified engagement patterns, and Pearson correlation analysis examined relationships between time spent, frequency of use, types of content, and psychological outcomes.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Patterns of Social Media Engagement

Instagram and TikTok were the most frequently used platforms, with 63.70% of athletes spending more than six hours daily on social media. The most common content consumed was sports-related (training tips, match highlights), followed by entertainment and motivational posts. Team sports athletes showed slightly higher daily usage compared to individual sports athletes.

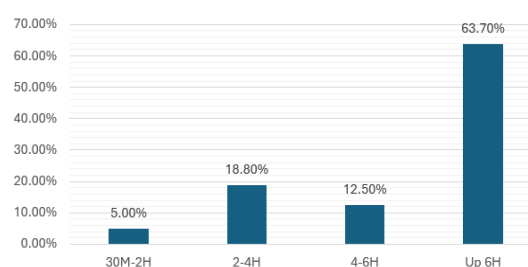


Fig. 1 Percentage of Time Spent on Social Media Daily.

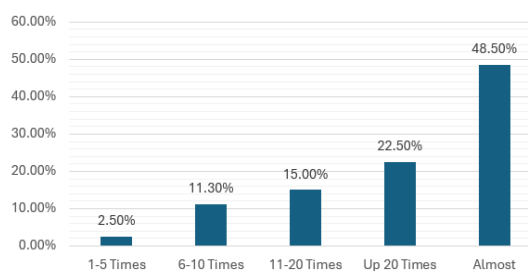


Fig. 2 Frequency of Checking Social Media Daily.

TABLE I
TYPE OF SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT ENGAGED BY RESPONDENTS

Variables	Frequency (n)	(%)
Sports & Fitness; Entertainment & Celebrities	4	5,0
Sports & Fitness; Education & Academics; Motivation & Psychology	6	7,5
Sports & Fitness; News & Politics; Entertainment & Celebrities	8	10,0
Sports & Fitness; Entertainment & Psychology	3	3,8
Sports & Fitness; Motivation & Psychology	6	2,5
Sports & Fitness; Entertainment, Education & Motivation	6	3,8
Sports a Fitness; Entertainment, Education Morivation	20	25,0
Entertainment & Celebrities	1	1,3
Entertainment & Celebrities; Education & Acad.	1	1,3
News & Politics, Entertainment, Education	20	2,5
News & Politics; Education & Motivation	1	1,3
Sports a Fitness News	1	1,3

B. Relationship Between Engagement and Psychological Well-Being

Findings revealed that higher social media engagement was moderately and positively correlated with anxiety ($r = 0.35, p = 0.001$) and depression ($r = 0.31, p = 0.005$), while showing a weak but significant negative correlation with self-esteem ($r = -0.22, p = 0.046$). This indicates that increased social media use is linked to greater anxiety and depressive symptoms, alongside lower self-esteem among youth athletes, suggesting that excessive engagement may negatively influence their overall psychological well-being.

TABLE II
SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING

	Social Media Engagement
Social Media Engagement Score	-
Score Anxiety (GAD-7) Score	0.353**
Depression (PHQ-9) Score	0.311**
Self-Esteem (RSES) Score	-0.224*

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Youth athletes' extensive social media use, especially passive engagement, correlates with higher anxiety, depression, and reduced self-esteem. While motivational and sports content offered slight benefits, comparison-driven posts were harmful. These findings underscore the need for mindful social media habits and targeted interventions to safeguard athletes' psychological well-being.

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