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THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON SPORTS INTEREST AND PARTICIPATION IN THE YOUNG GENERATION IN INDONESIA

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Abstract
This study aims to examine the influence of social media on the interest and participation of young people in Indonesia in sports. A quantitative survey method was used, involving 300 respondents aged 15-26 who actively use social media and participate in sports. The results show that the majority of respondents (75%) are exposed to sports content frequently to very frequently, with the high exposure group having an average sports frequency of 3.6 sessions per week, higher than the low exposure group, which only had 2.1 sessions. Regression analysis revealed intrinsic motivation as the main predictor of sports participation (β = 0.848), while social media exposure also had a significant positive effect (β = 0.581). These findings confirm that social media can increase internal motivation and sports frequency, but also has the potential to cause social pressure related to body image. Therefore, the recommendation from this study is the need for education and digital content curation. The goal is to optimize the positive effects of social media while minimizing its negative psychosocial impacts. This is expected to foster healthy and sustainable sports participation among the younger generation. In conclusion, social media contributes to increased sustainable sports participation, but this must be balanced with education to reduce psychosocial risks.
Keywords*: Social Media, Interest In Sports, Participation In Sports, Young Generation, Digital Content*

INTRODUCTION

Sport is one of the important aspects in character building, physical health, and mental well-being of the younger generation (Becheva et al., 2023). Regular physical activity has been shown to contribute to improving physical fitness, preventing chronic diseases, developing social skills, and building discipline and fighting power (Anderson & Durstine, 2019). However, in the current digital era, the activity patterns of the younger generation have undergone a significant shift. The development of technology, especially social media, has changed the way the younger generation interacts, seeks entertainment, and interprets sports as part of their lifestyle.

Social media now functions not only as a means of communication, but also as a space for self-representation and information consumption, including related to sports activities (Abidin et al., 2024). Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and

YouTube are filled with sports content that features workout routines, fitness challenges, and physical transformations that inspire and pressure young audiences to follow certain trends (Yin et al., 2024). This phenomenon brings two different sides. On the one hand, social media encourages increased interest and participation in sports because the younger generation is motivated to imitate their idols, follow fitness challenge trends, or simply maintain their self-image in the digital space. On the other hand, new problems have emerged in the form of a culture of "exercise to show off", unrealistic ideal body standards, and the consumption of fitness information that is not always based on science (Donovan et al., 2020).

Social media has become the main channel for young people to seek lifestyle inspiration, including sports (Vale & Fernandes, 2018). Exposure to sports content, such as training videos, fitness challenges, and physical transformations, can spark an initial interest in sports**.** By Social Learning Theory, individuals who often observe the positive activities of exemplary figures both athletes and influencers tend to imitate them, so that fosters interest and readiness to participate in sports (Yao et al., 2024)**.**

For example, the study (Aschwanden & Messner, 2024) It shows that influencers who don't have to be athletes with a lifestyle similar to their followers, can increase the enjoyment of exercise and encourage teenagers who are initially passive to be more active. Factors such as the authenticity of the content, the simplicity of daily activities, and the similarity of backgrounds have been shown to hold a significant influence in motivating their sports interests (Bochaver et al., 2023).

Furthermore, fitness content on social media is increasing Motivation in exercising through mechanisms such as modeling, self-presentation, and social comparison (Zheng & Li, 2024). Users who see influencers doing certain exercises not only gain techniques that can be replicated, but also feel competent to try their hand at themselves and feel part of the digital sports community (Xiao et al., 2025)

But**,** Social media also has the potential to hinder sports participation, especially through social mechanisms. One of them is Social Comparison, namely the tendency to compare oneself with others who appear fitter. A study by (Kim,

2022) concludes that upward comparison seeing a more "fit" actually increases physical self-efficacy and has a positive impact on motivation and sports participation; while Downward Comparison risk of lowering confidence to move actively.

On the other hand, exposure to content that is too idealistic and focused on appearance (fitspiration) can also trigger body dissatisfaction *(*body dissatisfaction*)* and anxiety about appearance. A study from BMC Psychology (Klier et al., 2022) It found that while some users get motivation through social media, more than a third experience negative effects such as body dissatisfaction and social pressure due to unrealistic body image standards.

This phenomenon is reinforced by large meta-analyses (Bonfanti et al., 2025) which revealed that the more often a person does social comparison online, the higher the likelihood of experiencing dissatisfaction with the body and symptoms of eating disorders (eating disorder symptoms*)*.

Digital interaction is good with Sports Figures And Online Community also plays an important role. Sports figures and influencers often present a model of training that can be followed, but what is even more powerful is that Personal identification and emotional relationships (parasocial) Brings stronger motivation (Durau et al., 2022). Online communities on social media, such as fitness groups or sports forums, also act as Digital Support System. They provide a space to share achievements, challenges, and support that reinforces a sense of community and sustainability of sports participation (Bell et al., 2024).

Furthermore, global research shows a significant relationship between exposure to sports content on social media and increased motivation of the younger generation to exercise. About 59% of teens in the United States use social media to seek inspiration for healthy lifestyles, including sports (Lim et al., 2022). In Indonesia, the APJII survey (2023) noted that more than 80% of internet users aged 16–24 are active on social media, and most access fitness-related content and healthy lifestyle trends. This indicates that social media has a strong influence on the sports mindset and behavior of the younger generation.

However, reliance on social media also poses risks. Excessive exposure to fitness influencer figures can create social pressure, body dissatisfaction, and purely image-oriented sports behaviors (Schlegel et al., 2021). This condition can weaken the essence of sports as a health and recreational activity, and shift the orientation of the younger generation towards the achievement of body aesthetics that are not always realistic (Benucci et al., 2024). Therefore, it is important to conduct scientific studies to understand the extent to which social media affects the interest and participation of the younger generation in the digital era, both from the positive aspects that encourage participation, and the negative aspects that have the potential to cause psychosocial problems.

The urgency of this research lies in its contribution in providing academic understanding as well as practical recommendations regarding sports education strategies that are relevant to digital culture. By integrating sports sociology approaches, motivational psychology, and digital media studies, this research is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the dynamics of sports of the younger generation in the social media era, as well as support policy formulation that is able to foster sports participation in a healthy, sustainable, and digital literacy-based manner.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative design with a survey method. This design was chosen because it allows researchers to obtain a broad picture of the influence of social media exposure on the sports interest and participation of the younger generation through questionnaire-based data collection. To see the relationship between variables, this study uses regression analysis to explain how much influence social media has on the variables of interest and participation in sports. The population in this study is the young generation aged 15-26 years who actively use social media such as Instagram, Tiktok, and Youtube, and have experience or involvement in sports activities. This population was chosen because it is a critical phase in the formation of exercise habits and intense use of social media. The sampling technique used purposive sampling, which amounted to 300 respondents from high school students, college students, and the Young Sports Community. The

respondents' criteria are, (1) active social media users for at least 2 hours per day, (2) have accounts on relevant social media platforms, and (3) engage in sports activities at least once a week. The instrument used was in the form of an online questionnaire (Google Form) with a Likert scale. The instrument will be tested for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha and its validity with a construct validity test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Variable	Total Respondents
Number of Respondents	300
Man	140 (46.7%)
woman	160 (53.3%)
Age	
15 – 18 years old	60 (20.0%)
19 – 22 years old	180 (60.0%
23 – 26 years old	60 (20.0%)
Social Media Usage Frequency (average/day)	
< 2 Hours	10 %
2 – 4 hours	35 %
> 4 hours	55 %
Sports Content Exposure Distribution	
Very Often	135 (45.0%
Often	90 (30%)
Sometimes	54 (18.0%)
Infrequently	21 (7.0%)

Demographically, the sample is dominated by women (53.3%) and focused on the age range of 19–22 years (60%), which is consistent with the target population of the younger generation. Descriptive analysis of behavioral variables showed that the majority of respondents used social media more than 4 hours a day (55%). In addition, the frequency of exposure to sports content on social media also tends to be high, with 75% of respondents reported being exposed to this content "Very Often" or "Frequently". This distribution effectively validates the sample as a relevant representation for research examining the influence of social media, as most respondents are active users who are exposed to sports content on a regular basis.

Table 2. Item Brief Statistics (n = 300)

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
Content makes you want to try new sports	4.043	0.986
Motivated by figures on social media	3.833	1.037
Body image pressure due to social media	2.920	1.091

The average (mean) of the item "Content makes you want to try a new sport" was the highest (4,043), followed by "Motivated by figures on social media"

(3,833). Most respondents (about 75%) responded positively by choosing a score of 4 or 5 on the item "Content makes you want to try a new sport". As many as 68% of respondents indicated that figures or influencers on social media have an important role in motivating participation. These findings show that exposure to sports content on social media effectively increases respondents' intention and interest in starting physical activity. This shows that content and figures on social media have a substantial role in arousing respondents' interest in sports. Meanwhile, the item "Body image pressure due to social media" had the lowest average (2,920), which was around the neutral point of the scale, indicating the polarity of respondents' views on the negative effects. These findings highlight that in addition to motivation, social media can also trigger social comparisons that have the potential to affect an individual's psychology and the quality of their motivation.

The frequency of participation is measured based on the exercise sessions per week. The analysis showed that the group with higher content exposure also had a higher frequency of exercise.

- High exposure group (Very Frequent + Frequent): average ≈ 3.6 sessions per week.
  This means that respondents who are often or very often exposed to sports content on social media, on average exercise about 3 to 4 times in one week
- Low exposure group (Occasional + Rare): average ≈ 2.1 sessions per week.
  This means that respondents who are rarely or occasionally exposed to sports content on social media, exercise on average about 2 times in one week.

Independent t-tests showed significant differences ($t=8.495$, $p<0.001$), confirming that the more likely a person is to be exposed to sports content on social media, the higher the frequency of their participation in sports.

Table 3. Correlation Matrix

Variable	EMSO	Intrinsic	Extrinsic	PBC	Sessions
EMSO	1.000	0.341	0.500	0.242	0.500
Intrinsic	0.341	1.000	0.223	0.095	0.528
Extrinsic	0.500	0.223	1.000	0.195	0.410
PBC	0.242	0.095	0.195	1.000	0.121
Sessions	0.500	0.528	0.410	0.121	1.000

Social media exposure (EMSO) showed a moderate to strong positive correlation with the frequency of exercise (sessions) and extrinsic motivation ($r \approx 0.50$). These findings indicate that increased exposure to social media content is associated with a higher frequency of participation, which may be driven by external factors, such as social pressure or a desire for validation.

Intrinsic motivation was shown to have the strongest correlation with exercise frequency ($r \approx 0.53$). This dominant correlation confirms the crucial role of internal motivations such as personal enjoyment and a sense of accomplishment in encouraging consistent exercise behaviors. In other words, the drive from within the individual is the most powerful predictor of sustained sports participation.

Table 4. Regression Coefficients

Variable	Coefficient (β)	p-value	95% CI
Intercept	1.534	0.004	[0.486, 2.581]
C(gender)[Female]	-0.202	0.068	[-0.419, 0.015]
C(social_hours)[< 2 hours]	0.009	0.965	[-0.393, 0.411]
C(social_hours)[> 4 hours]	0.126	0.293	[-0.109, 0.362]
EMSO	0.581	0.000	[0.430, 0.732]
Intrinsic	0.848	0.000	[0.670, 1.026]
extrinsic	0.025	0.771	[-0.143, 0.193]
PBC	-0.013	0.900	[-0.215, 0.189]

Social media exposure has been shown to be a positive and significant predictor of the frequency of exercise ($\beta=0.581, p<0.001$). This shows that the more often a person is exposed to sports content on social media, the higher the frequency of their participation in sports.

Intrinsic motivation was the strongest predictor in this model ($\beta=0.848, p<0.001$). A coefficient greater than other variables indicates that internal motivations—such as pleasure and personal satisfaction—have the greatest influence on actual exercise participation. Variables such as extrinsic motivation ($\beta=0.025, p=0.771$), behavioral control (PBC, $\beta=-0.013, p=0.900$), gender, and duration of social media use (social_hours) were not shown to have a significant influence on the frequency of exercise in this model. This implies that their influence is not strong enough to statistically predict sports participation behavior.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions of this study show that social media plays a significant dual role in influencing sports interest and participation among the younger generation in Indonesia. Exposure to sports content on digital platforms is able to generate intrinsic motivation which is a major predictor of sustainable sports behavior. Digital platforms serve as tools to spark initial interest and motivate participation, largely through social learning mechanisms where individuals imitate role models (influencers or athletes) and interact in online communities.

Regression analysis shows that social media exposure is a significant positive predictor of participation, but intrinsic motivation (personal enjoyment and satisfaction) has a stronger and dominant influence in encouraging sustained participation. On the other hand, this study also highlights the negative side, namely the risk of social comparison and body image pressure that can trigger body dissatisfaction. While social media can be a powerful driver, overly idealistic content can shift motivation from health and recreation to mere aesthetic achievement or external validation

Therefore, it is important to have education and content curation that focuses on the basic principles of safe and sustainable sports, not just following future trends. Research needs to be focused on developing educational strategies and curation of digital content that can optimize the positive effects of social media while minimizing negative psychosocial impacts, for the sake of creating healthy and sustainable sports participation in the digital era. Thus, social media can be optimally utilized to foster healthy and positive sports participation in the long term among the younger generation.

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