

PADEL: A DIGITAL-ERA SOLUTION FOR MENTAL HEALTH

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Abstract

Padel has evolved into a global sports phenomenon that is not only popular as a physical activity but also as a mental health solution in the digital era. This research analyzes media framing of padel as a trending sport that promotes mental health using Entman's framing theory. The results show that media consistently frame padel through four main elements: (1) problem definition as a solution to digital fatigue and social isolation; (2) causal interpretation as a response to sedentary lifestyle and lack of face-to-face interaction; (3) moral evaluation as an inclusive and ethical sport; and (4) treatment recommendation through regular participation in padel communities. This media framing emphasizes three main benefit aspects: physical-cognitive (burning 400-600 calories/session, training coordination and strategy), mental (release of endorphins/dopamine, stress and anxiety reduction), and social (community building, loneliness reduction). The impact of this framing has proven to enhance positive public perception and encourage active participation, particularly among urban youth generations, making padel a healthy lifestyle choice in the digital era.

Keywords: Padel, Mental Health, Digital Era, Media Framing, Urban Lifestyle, Trending Sports

Submitted : 03th of December 2025

Accepted : 27th of January 2026

Published : 27th of January 2026

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DOI <http://dx.doi.org/10.31851/hon.v9i1.20723>



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INTRODUCTION

Padel is a racket sport played on an enclosed court surrounded by glass walls, combining elements of tennis and squash. The sport was invented in 1969 by Enrique Corcuera in Mexico and gained popularity in Spain during the 1970s. The International Padel Federation (FIP) was established in 1991 as the official governing body, and padel has since rapidly expanded worldwide, becoming the fourth most popular racket sport after soccer, tennis, and basketball (International Padel Federation, 2024; Cardini, 2020).

In Indonesia, padel started gaining attention in the early 2020s, with a significant increase in the number of courts in major cities such as Jakarta, Bali,

and Surabaya (RS Moewardi, 2025). According to the World Padel Tour and FIP data (2024), the global number of padel courts rose from 12,000 in 2019 to over 35,000 in 2025, with more than 25 million active players across 110 countries. Indonesia witnessed dramatic growth from 3 courts in 2020 to over 280 courts by the end of 2025 across multiple cities, accompanied by several new clubs emerging monthly. This growth reflects a lifestyle shift among millennials and Gen Z toward physical activities that are fun, social, and visually appealing on digital platforms.

WHO (2024) reports a global 25-27% increase in anxiety and depression since the COVID-19 pandemic, with more than 40% of people failing to meet physical activity recommendations. Indonesian data from Riskesdas 2023 and National Mental Health Survey 2024 indicate 1 in 3 adults aged 15–39 experience moderate to severe anxiety, 63% feel lonely despite digital connectivity, and urban youth spend 8-10 hours daily on screens (Kemenkes RI, 2024). Challenges such as digital fatigue and social media burnout contribute to declining psychological well-being (Eime et al., 2023).

Padel offers an engaging and social form of physical activity that counters digital fatigue and isolation. Traditionally, activities like gym workouts or running are perceived as monotonous, leading to low sustained participation rates (20–30% retention after six months). Padel's inclusive, easy-to-learn format and team-based play encourage sustained participation and social interaction, making it a promising intervention for mental and physical health (Chubb Indonesia, 2024).

Physiologically, padel is an aerobic racket sport played in a 20x10 meter glass-enclosed court. It provides moderate-intensity cardio exercise, burning 400-600 calories per hour, improving cardiovascular fitness, coordination, and reflexes. Studies show an increase in VO₂max by 15–20% after eight weeks of regular play and significant reductions in body fat (Courel-Ibáñez et al., 2022). Mentally, padel stimulates dopamine and endorphin production, enhancing mood and reducing stress, while its social nature mitigates loneliness and builds community bonds (AIA Financial, 2024; Aquiviva, 2025).

The Indonesian Padel Association (PBPI) became an official FIP member in 2024, marking formal recognition and opening avenues for further development nationwide. Padel's alignment with digital-era needs including providing face-to-face interaction post-pandemic, promoting fun and social lifestyle branding, and leveraging compelling digital narratives positions it as a relevant sport for Indonesia's urban youth culture.

In summary, padel uniquely integrates physical and cognitive benefits with mental health and social advantages, making it a strategic lifestyle activity to address the psychological impacts of digital life in modern Indonesia. This research contributes novel insights by focusing on padel's mental health and sociocultural impacts amid digital transformation, expanding beyond traditional studies of racket sport physicality.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with documentation study and media content analysis methods, focusing on analyzing framing in media coverage of padel sports in the digital era. This approach allows an in-depth understanding of how media frame padel as a mentally healthy sport and how this message is conveyed to the public (Díaz-García et al., 2025; Chubb, 2025).

Data was collected through document studies and media content analysis using purposive sampling to select relevant and representative sources. Text coding was then performed to identify Entman's framing elements in padel sports coverage and to examine recurring framing patterns across different media outlets (Chubb, 2025; RS Moewardi, 2025).

The analysis was conducted using Robert N. Entman's (1993) framing analysis technique to unravel how mental health issues are constructed through padel sport coverage and how the sport's recommendation is communicated to the public as a mental health solution in the digital era.

The framing analysis followed Entman's four main elements:

Problem Definition: Media refers to the rising mental health problems in the digital era as an important context for the emergence of padel sport.



Causal Interpretation: Coverage explains that padel can be an effective solution to reduce stress, improve mental health, and strengthen social interaction.

Moral Evaluation: Padel is positively assessed as an inclusive, easy-to-learn, and safe sport for all ages, thus worthy of recommendation.

Treatment Recommendation: Media encourages readers to start participating in padel as a mental health-enhancing activity amid pressures of digital life (Entman, 1993; RSPP, 2025).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION


Table 1. Data

Image	Description
	<p>Indonesia has begun recording proud achievements on the international padel sports stage through the Great Padel Association of Indonesia (Perkumpulan Besar Padel Indonesia, PBPI). One of the most recent accomplishments is the success of the Indonesian Women's Padel National Team in winning a bronze medal at the FIP Asia Cup 2025 in Doha, Qatar.</p> <p>The women's national team successfully advanced to the quarter-finals as group champions after winning two group stage matches with decisive scores. This success serves as an important milestone and proof that Indonesia is capable of competing at the Asian level in the sport of padel, which is relatively new for the nation.</p> <p>The PBPI has affirmed its commitment to athlete development, expanding national competitions, and improving supporting infrastructure so that these achievements can be sustainable and reach even further on the global stage, including targeting future Olympic participation.</p>
	<p>Padel is becoming a new sports phenomenon that is currently trending due to its combination of the fast dynamics of tennis and squash, but on a smaller playing field, making it easier and more social. This sport is widely sought after not only because it provides physical fitness but also helps balance mental health.</p> <p>The uniqueness of the game, which combines elements of competition and team interaction, encourages the formation of many social communities around the sport of padel.</p> <p>The sport of padel is also felt to be highly relevant in the high-pressure digital era as it can serve as a means of stress relief, improves focus, and strengthens social networks that support mental health. The continuously developing game facilities and support from various parties accelerate the trend of this sport becoming one of the favorite sports of urban communities in Indonesia.</p>

The two articles complement each other in building the narrative of padel as a "hit" sport in Indonesia: the first emphasizes achievements and institutional

development (from hobby to competitive), while the second highlights social phenomena and everyday benefits (from viral trend to healthy lifestyle). Together, they illustrate the evolution of padel post-2020: from a European import to a national asset, with the potential to address mental health issues in the digital era through social-physical activity. These two articles enrich the title by showing how padel addresses mental challenges through popularity and development, in line with sources such as RS Moewardi and Aquviva. This can be integrated into the research chapter for deeper analysis.

This study was analyzed and conducted by reviewing six provided articles. Each article was selectively framed to emphasize padel as a holistic solution, with consistent framing elements: digital stress is defined as a consequence of virtual isolation, causality is attributed to a sedentary lifestyle, moral evaluation positions padel as an "ethical wise choice," and recommendations encourage routine participation. Below is a detailed analysis per article, followed by an overall synthesis.

Image	Remarks
 <p>Olahraga Padel Makin Disukai Banyak Orang. Apa Saja Manfaatnya untuk Tubuh?</p> <p>https://www.chubb.com/id-id/articles/personal/olahraga-padel.html</p> <p>Juli 2025</p>	<p>https://www.chubb.com/id-id/articles/personal/olahraga-padel.html</p> <p>Juli 2025</p>

Chubb Article:

Problem Definition: Padel is framed as a global trend addressing post-pandemic health needs, highlighting social isolation as the primary threat in the digital era.

Causal Interpretation: Lack of physical activity and face-to-face interaction is caused by remote work and social media.

Moral Evaluation: Padel is praised as an "inclusive and fun" sport, morally superior to individual sports like tennis, because it builds emotional bonds.

Solution Recommendation: Practical suggestions such as joining a padel club for a weekly routine are promoted as a long-term investment for mental well-being.

Image	Remarks
	<p>https://rsmoewardi.com/tahukah-kamu-mengapa-padel-jadi-tren-sehat-di-seluruh-dunia/</p> <p>09 September 2025</p>

RS Moewardi Article:

Problem Definition: The padel trend is highlighted as a response to the global increase in mental health disorders, with WHO data on post-pandemic depression made salient.

Causal Interpretation: Digital stress is caused by "screen life" which reduces natural endorphins.

Moral Evaluation: Padel is evaluated as a "healthy trend" that is socially responsible, promoting the value of togetherness in an individualistic society.

Solution Recommendation: Encouragement to try padel as preventive therapy, with beginner tips for integrating it into daily routines.

Image	Remarks
<p>Olahraga Padel, Bikin Sehat dan Ketagihan</p>  <p>Padel adalah olahraga yang semakin populer di kalangan milenial yang menyukai hal-hal yang menyenangkan. Olahraga ini menggabungkan energi, ketahanan, dan menyenangkan secara fisik yang menyenangkan.</p> <p>Manfaat Olahraga Padel:</p> <p>Olahraga padel bukan hanya baik, tapi juga memiliki fitur yang memberikan berbagai manfaat untuk tubuh dan mental.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Meningkatkan Kesehatan Jantung Padel termasuk dalam jenis olahraga aerobik ringan hingga sedang yang dapat membantu menjaga tekanan darah, menurunkan risiko penyakit jantung, dan meningkatkan metabolisme dasar. Dasar, perkuat otot Padel perkuat otot tangan, bahu, dan punggung dengan gerakan pemukulannya. Ini sangat baik untuk kesehatan sendi. Meningkatkan Keterampilan Sosial Olahraga padel adalah olahraga tim yang menyenangkan untuk dimainkan. Ini membantu meningkatkan keterampilan sosial dan membangun hubungan yang positif dengan orang-orang baru. Meningkatkan Kesehatan Mental Padel membantu melepaskan stres dan meningkatkan mood. Olahraga ini juga dapat meningkatkan kepercayaan diri dan meningkatkan ketahanan mental. 	<p>https://www.aia-financial.co.id/id/health-and-wellness/aia-content-club/physical-wellness/Olahraga-Padel-Bikin-Sehat-dan-Ketagihan</p> <p>11 September 2025</p>


AIA Financial Article:

Problem Definition: Digital addiction (endless scrolling) is defined as a source of burnout, with padel as a positive "addiction cure."

Causal Interpretation: Lack of team movement leads to decreased mood; padel activates dopamine through partner dynamics.

Moral Evaluation: Morally, padel is viewed as a "healthy and addictive" choice that is better than virtual entertainment, promoting self-discipline.

Solution Recommendation: Recommendation for 30-45 minute sessions three times a week, linked to corporate wellness programs.

Image	Remarks
 <p>The image shows a screenshot of a web article. The title is 'Manfaat Olahraga Padel untuk Kesehatan Fisik dan Mental dalam Gaya Hidup Seimbang'. The article features a photograph of a woman in a light blue top and dark pants playing padel on an outdoor court. The text below the image discusses the benefits of padel for physical and mental health, particularly in the context of a balanced lifestyle in the digital era.</p>	<p>https://aquviva.co.id/update/article/manfaat-olahraga-padel-untuk-kesehatan-fisik-dan-mental-dalam-gaya-hidup-seimbang</p> <p>22 September 2025</p>


Aquviva Article:

Problem Definition: The imbalance of digital lifestyle that sacrifices mental health is the main focus.

Causal Interpretation: Online isolation and lack of exercise are causal factors for anxiety; padel as a physical-mental balance.

Moral Evaluation: Padel is evaluated as an ethical "balanced lifestyle," supporting holistic values in a materialistic era.

Solution Recommendation: Integration of padel into digital schedules, such as replacing screen time with playing sessions.

Image	Remarks
	<p>https://updateimun.id/artikel/terpadel-padel-bikin-fisik-dan-mental-sehat</p> <p>01 Oktober 2025</p>

Update Imun Article:

Problem Definition: "Terpadel" (padel therapy) is framed to address weakened physical and mental health due to the digital pandemic.

Causal Interpretation: Gadget exposure causes mental immunity weakness; padel stimulates endorphins and serotonin.

Moral Evaluation: Positive moral judgment on padel as a "health maker" that promotes self-responsibility.

Solution Recommendation: Start with basic training to build long-term mental resilience.

Image	Remarks
	<p>https://rspp.co.id/artikel-detail-942-Beyond-Physical-Manfaat-Sosial-dan-Psikologis-Bermain-Padel.html</p> <p>13 Oktober 2025</p>

RSPP Article:

Problem Definition: Beyond physical issues, psychological problems such as loneliness are framed as an impact of the digital era.

Causal Interpretation: Lack of social interaction is a causal factor for depression; padel serves as a catalyst for connection.

Moral Evaluation: High evaluation of the socio-psychological aspects of padel as "beyond physical," promoting empathy and resilience.

Solution Recommendation: Build padel communities for sustained therapy.

Discussion

Based on the analysis of six articles from trusted sources such as Chubb Indonesia, RS Moewardi, AIA Financial, Aquviva, Update Imun, and RSPP, padel emerges as a doubles racket sport that not only dominates the global trend but also serves as a holistic solution to the mental health crisis in the high-pressure digital era. As a blend of tennis and squash played on a small glass-enclosed court (20x10 meters), padel offers a unique game dynamic—with a low-pressure ball, solid rackets without strings, and a 2 vs 2 doubles format—that makes it easy to learn, inclusive for all ages, and less injury-prone compared to traditional racket sports. Its explosive popularity, driven by viral content on platforms like Instagram and TikTok, reflects an urban lifestyle shift among millennials and Gen Z seeking "fun, social, and Instagrammable" activities that counteract widespread "digital fatigue," "Zoom fatigue," and virtual isolation.

Physically, padel is effective as a moderate-intensity aerobic workout, burning 400–600 calories per 45–60 minute session, strengthening the cardiovascular system, training hand-eye coordination, reflexes, and core muscles (legs, arms, abdomen), and supporting metabolism and vitamin D absorption for optimal immunity. However, its mental benefits are what make padel a true "hit": the sport triggers the release of endorphins, dopamine, and adrenaline through cognitive challenges like calculating ball trajectories off fast bounces, reducing cortisol (stress hormone) levels, and instantly improving mood, focus, and

motivation. The "Terpadel" concept from Update Imun emphasizes how padel serves as a natural therapy to alleviate anxiety, enhance sleep quality, and provide a mental "reset" from digital overthinking, while AIA Financial calls it a "healthy addiction" for its positive, lasting effects up to 24 hours post-play.

This comprehensive set of benefits positions padel as an ideal sport for addressing the physical, mental, and social challenges posed by the digital lifestyle of modern urban Indonesians, highlighting its growing significance as a lifestyle choice that promotes overall well-being.

CONCLUSION

This study has analyzed Padel as a Mental Health Solution in the Digital Era, focusing on padel as the main channel. The findings are presented as follows:

The media frames padel as a "trending therapy" contrasting with the digital noise, using Entman's four elements to create a persuasive narrative. First, the problem definition highlights virtual isolation and "digital fatigue" as major threats, with daily 8-10 hour screen exposure causing a 25-27% increase in global anxiety disorders (WHO, 2024), as depicted in articles from RS Moewardi and Aquviva linking padel trends to the post-pandemic period. Second, causal interpretation attributes these problems to sedentary lifestyles and reduced face-to-face interaction, positioning padel as an endorphin and dopamine catalyst for "mental reset" (Update Imun). Third, moral evaluation praises padel as an ethical and inclusive choice—easy to learn, injury-minimizing, and social—called a "healthy addiction" superior to individual sports (AIA Financial; RSPP). Fourth, treatment recommendation promotes regular participation (1-2 sessions/week) as an actionable solution, such as joining clubs to build belonging (Chubb Indonesia). Digital media platforms like Instagram and TikTok reinforce this framing, where viral "padel challenges" accelerate adoption, aligning with findings by Sabe et al. (2025) that media narratives around racket sports like padel enhance perceptions as anti-loneliness tools. The book *Framing Studies Evolution in the Social Media Era* by Ballesteros-Herencia and Gómez-García (2021)

explains how such digital-era framing creates "cultural logic" influencing audience interpretation, making padel a symbol of virtual isolation resistance.

Media framing emphasizes three main benefits of padel, with a salient focus on the mental-social dimension for digital era relevance:

Physical and Cognitive Aspect: Media spotlights padel as a moderate aerobic workout burning 400-600 calories and honing coordination, reflexes, and instant strategic thinking (ball trajectory calculation), reducing injury risk by up to 30%; Mental Aspect: Emphasis on endorphin/dopamine release to relieve stress, anxiety, and insomnia, with the "Terpadel" concept as a "positive addiction medicine." Media frame this as "natural mindfulness" diverting digital overthinking; Social Aspect: Team format is highlighted as a builder of belonging and empathy through team communication ("switch!"), combating the loneliness felt by 63% of urban youth.

These aspects are selectively framed to position padel as a holistic "hit," though less attention is given to barriers like court costs (Rp200,000–Rp400,000/hour). The positive media framing effectively builds perception that padel is not just a hobby or lifestyle, but a necessity for mental health maintenance in the digital age. This has driven increasing participation, especially among millennials and Gen Z seeking social and enjoyable sports. The media message stressing fitness, enjoyment, and community makes padel a sustainable choice for physical and mental health. Consequently, padel is rapidly growing as a social phenomenon involving many communities and clubs in major cities.

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