Available online at: http://journal.unj.ac.id/unj/index.php/gjik
Gladi: Jurnal Ilmu Keolahragaan 15 (04) 2024, 441-454
Permalink/DOI: https://doi.org/10.21009/GJIK.154.01

TRENDS AND PATTERNS OF SELF EFFICACY IN ATHLETE: BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS FROM 2014-2024

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(Submission Track: Received: 30-10-2024, Final Revision: 29-12-2024, Available Online: 31-12-2024)

Abstract This study aims to map the development of scientific research on self-efficacy in athletes from 2014 to 2024 through bibliometric analysis. The research focuses on identifying trends in publication, collaboration networks, and frequently used keywords. Data were collected from the Scopus database using the keywords "self-efficacy" and "athlete," yielding 339 articles. The analysis was conducted using VOSviewer to visualize co-authorship, keyword co-occurrence, and citation trends. Results indicate a significant increase in research productivity, especially from 2019 onwards, with major themes including mental health, athletic performance, and sports injury rehabilitation. The International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health emerged as the leading journal, and MJ Turner was identified as the most prolific author. Co-authorship networks revealed strong collaborations primarily in Europe and North America, with emerging contributions from Asia. This study provides specific insights into thematic clusters. For instance, mental health research emphasizes anxiety and well-being, while injury rehabilitation focuses on return-to-sport programs. Practical implications suggest integrating technology-based interventions and tailored psychological programs to address these themes. The findings contribute to filling knowledge gaps by offering a systematic understanding of self-efficacy research in sports, emphasizing the need for interdisciplinary approaches in future studies.

Keywords: Self-efficacy; Athlete; Bibliometric; Sport; Psychology

INTRODUCTION

Self-efficacy is a crucial psychological construct in the field of sports. Bandura (1977) defines self-efficacy as an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform specific tasks or actions. Self-efficacy is developed from four primary sources: direct experience (previous achievements), which is the most influential; vicarious experience (observing the success of others); social persuasion (encouragement or feedback from others); and physiological and emotional control (such as managing stress or anxiety). Maddux (1995) later introduced a fifth source, namely imaginary experiences or visualization.

In the context of sports, psychological ability, such as self-efficacy is a crucial determinant of athletes success, influencing performance and stress recovery (Dewi et al., 2022). Athletes with high self-efficacy are more committed, resilient, and motivated, set challenging goals, and excel under pressure (Lochbaum et al., 2023). Previous research by Wurtele (1986) stated that the strongest source of information related to self-efficacy in athletes is past achievements. Jenkins (2008) also identified self-efficacy as a key factor influencing athletic performance. Therefore, developing self-efficacy is an essential focus for enhancing athletic performance.

Furthermore, a meta-analysis by Moritz et al., (2000) demonstrated a correlation between self-efficacy and performance outcomes across various sports contexts. Athletes with higher levels of self-efficacy tend to be fully committed in training, work harder, and display greater resilience when facing challenges. They are more likely to set challenging goals and perform well under pressure. Conversely, athletes with lower self-efficacy tend to set easier goals, avoid challenges, and exhibit lower motivation (Jenkins, 2008).

Given its significance, there is a growing need for specialized programs aimed at enhancing self-efficacy in athletes. However, the development of such programs requires a thorough understanding of existing research trends and gaps in the literature. A bibliometric approach provides a systematic method to analyze research productivity, identify key contributors, and explore emerging themes in self-efficacy studies within sports contexts.

This study aims to map the landscape of scientific research on self-

efficacy in athletes from 2014 to 2024 through bibliometric analysis. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Analyze trends in the productivity of scientific publications on self-efficacy in athletes.
2. Identify influential journals, authors, and articles contributing to this field.
3. Explore frequently occurring keywords and thematic clusters in research.
4. Highlight emerging research themes and provide directions for future studies.

By addressing these objectives, this study not only fills the gap in bibliometric analysis of self-efficacy in athletes but also offers actionable insights for researchers, educators, and practitioners. The findings aim to contribute to the broader understanding of how self-efficacy impacts athletic performance and inform the design of targeted interventions to enhance athletes' psychological preparedness and performance outcomes.

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative descriptive approach using bibliometric analysis to systematically explore trends and patterns in research on self-efficacy in athletes. Bibliometric analysis is widely recognized for its ability to evaluate scientific publications by leveraging quantitative data, including publication counts, researcher collaboration, and thematic trends (Abdullah & Sofyan, 2022; Donthu et al., 2021). Also, insights into journal quality, maturity, productivity, and related aspects of published articles can be systematically obtained using bibliometric analysis (Dewi et al., 2023). By combining bibliometric insights with detailed quantitative analysis, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the development and focus areas in this research field.

Data was sourced from the Scopus database, a globally recognized repository for academic publications, covering the time frame from 2014 to 2024. The search terms "self-efficacy" and "athlete" were used to ensure the relevance of retrieved articles. The collected data was analyzed using VOSviewer, a software tool specifically designed for bibliometric studies. The analysis involved both qualitative interpretations and quantitative measurements to ensure robust insights

about co-authorship, co-occurrence, and spatial analysis, enabling a comprehensive mapping of the research network.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
RESULT

From the Scopus database, 339 articles relevant to the research keywords were identified. These articles were analyzed based on various aspects, such as keyword usage, country of origin, most influential authors, trends in the number of articles published, and citation trends.

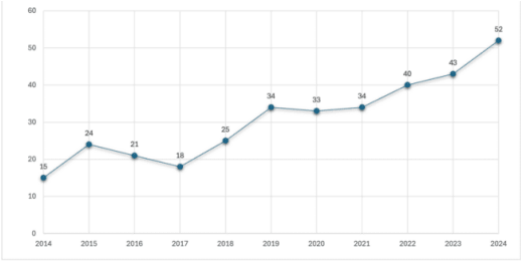

Figure 1. Scientific Publication Productivity on Self-Efficacy in Athletes from 2014 to 2024

Figure 1 shows the number of articles published on self-efficacy in athletes from 2014 to 2024. In 2014, there were 15 articles, which then increased to 24 in 2015. In 2016, the number decreased to 21 articles and continued to drop to 18 in 2017. In 2018, the number of articles rose again to 25. The article count continued to grow significantly in 2019, reaching 34, and remained stable at 33 articles in 2020. In 2021, the number of articles increased to 34, followed by a more significant rise in 2022 to 40 articles. In 2023, the article count reached 43, and finally, in 2024, the number increased sharply to 52 articles.

Table 1. Journals Publishing Articles on Self-Efficacy in Athletes

Journal	Article	%
International Journal Of Environmental Research And Public Health	18	19
Psychology Of Sport And Exercise	16	17
Journal Of Sport And Exercise Psychology	10	11
Scandinavian Journal Of Medicine And Science In Sports	9	10
Frontiers In Psychology	8	9
Journal Of Sports Sciences	7	8
Sport Psychologist	7	8
Journal Of Applied Sport Psychology	6	6
Journal Of Athletic Training	6	6
Journal Of Strength And Conditioning Research	6	6

Table 1 presents the number and percentage of articles published across various journals related to Self-Efficacy in Athletes. The *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public*

Health ranks highest with 18 articles, accounting for 19% of the total. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* follows in second place with 16 articles, representing 17%. Next, the *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* published 10 articles, or 11%, followed by the *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine and Science in Sports* with 9 articles (10%). *Frontiers in Psychology* contributed 8 articles (9%), while both the *Journal of Sports Sciences* and *Sport Psychologist* each contributed 7 articles (8%). Other journals, such as the *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, *Journal of Athletic Training*, and *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research*, each published 6 articles, comprising 6% of the total publications.

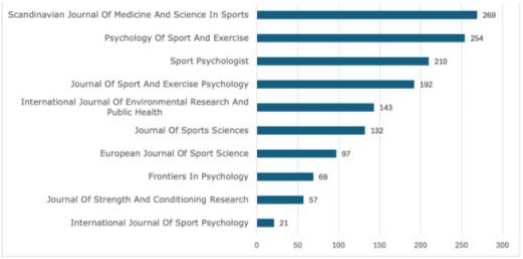

Figure 2. Journals Citations on Self-Efficacy in Athletes

Figure 2 shows the number of citations from various journals related to self-efficacy in athletes. The *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine and Science in Sports* has the highest citation count with 269 citations, followed by *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* with 254 citations. *Sport Psychologist* ranks third with 210 citations, while the *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* recorded 192 citations. The *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* received 143 citations, while the *Journal of Sports Sciences* has 132 citations. Other journals listed in this figure include the *European Journal of Sport Science* with 97 citations, *Frontiers in Psychology* with 69 citations, the *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research* with 57 citations, and the *International Journal of Sport Psychology* with 21 citations.

The researchers then identified the most active and influential authors in the field of self-efficacy in athletes by examining the number of publications and citations, with citations serving as an indicator of influence (Zupic & Čater 2015). Of the 339 published titles, a total of 1,288 authors contributed to this field. MJ Turner from Manchester Metropolitan University stands out as the most prolific author, with 8 published articles. Further details can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Authors Publishing Articles on Self-Efficacy in Athletes

Author	Country	Article
Turner, MJ	Inggris	8
Gacek, M	Polandia	6
Habeeb, CM	Inggris	5
Barkoukis, V	Yunani	4
Fernandes, GJ	Brazil	4
Kavussanu, M	Inggris	4
Paes, MJ	Brazil	4
Ring, C	Inggris	4
Stefanello, JMF	Brazil	4
Barker, JB	Inggris	3

Based on the number of published articles, the researchers sought to identify which articles had the greatest influence on the topic of the 2013 curriculum in physical education. Among the 339 titles listed in the Scopus database, the article titled *"Personal and Psychosocial Predictors of Doping Use in Physical Activity Settings: A Meta-Analysis"* by Nikos Ntoumanis, published in 2014, emerged as the most cited, with a total of 267 citations. This article by Ntoumanis et al., (2014) encompasses studies examining variables such as demographics, attitudes, social norms, and self-efficacy to explore personal and psychosocial factors influencing doping intentions and behavior. The findings indicate that the use of legal supplements, perceived social norms, and positive attitudes toward doping increase the risk of doping intentions and behavior, while morality and self-efficacy to resist doping decrease this risk. The second most cited article, titled *"The Concept of Mental Toughness: Nomological Network, and Traitness"* by Gucciardi et al., (2015), explains the close relationship between mental toughness and self-efficacy across various achievement contexts, such as sports, education, the military, and the workplace. This research shows that mental toughness is positively related to self-efficacy, which, in turn, contributes to enhanced performance under pressure and resilience in the face of challenges. Further details can be found in Figure 3.

Title	Author	Journal	Citation	Year
Personal And Psychosocial Predictors Of Doping Use In Physical Activity Settings: A Meta-Analysis	Ntoumanis N	Sports Medicine	267	2014
The Concept Of Mental Toughness: Nomological Network, And Traitness	Gucciardi DF	Journal Of Personality	243	2015
Psychological Determinants Of Whole-Body Endurance Performance	Mccormick A	Sports Medicine	200	2015
Believing In "Us": Exploring Leaders' Capacity To Enhance Team Confidence And Performance By Building A Sense Of Shared Social Identity	Fransen K	Journal Of Experimental Psychology: Applied	126	2015
Psychological Aspects Of Recovery Following Anterior Cruciate Ligament Reconstruction	Christino MA	Journal Of The American Academy Of Orthopaedic Surgeons	120	2015
Effects Of Coach Leadership And Coach-Athlete Relationship On Collective Efficacy	Hampson R	Scandinavian Journal Of Medicine & Science In Sports	98	2014
Stressors, Coping, And Support Mechanisms For Student Athletes Combining Elite Sport And Tertiary Education: Implications For Practice	Cosh S	The Sport Psychologist	92	2015
Positive Personality-Trait-Like Individual Differences In Athletes From Individual- And Team Sports And In Non-Athletes	Laborde S	Psychology Of Sport And Exercise	74	2016
Resilience In Youth Sport: A Qualitative Investigation Of Gymnastics Coach And Athlete Perceptions.	White RL	International Journal Of Sports Science & Coaching	68	2015
Toward An Integrative Model Of Doping Use: An Empirical Study With Adolescent Athletes	Lazuras L	Journal Of Sport And Exercise Psychology	61	2015

Figure 3. Most Cited Articles on Self-Efficacy in Athletes

The data visualization analysis using VOSViewer shows that the most frequently occurring keyword in the research sample is "human," appearing 238 times, followed by "athlete," which appears 221 times. The keyword "male" appears 157 times, while "female" appears 155 times, and "article" appears 140 times. Additionally, "self concept" appears 136 times, "adult" 132 times, followed by "controlled study" at 91 occurrences, "psychology" at 90 occurrences, and "adolescent," which appears 84 times. The ten most frequently occurring keywords, along with their bibliometric characteristics such as total link strength, are also displayed. The visualization of item density for these frequently occurring keywords can be seen in Figure 4.

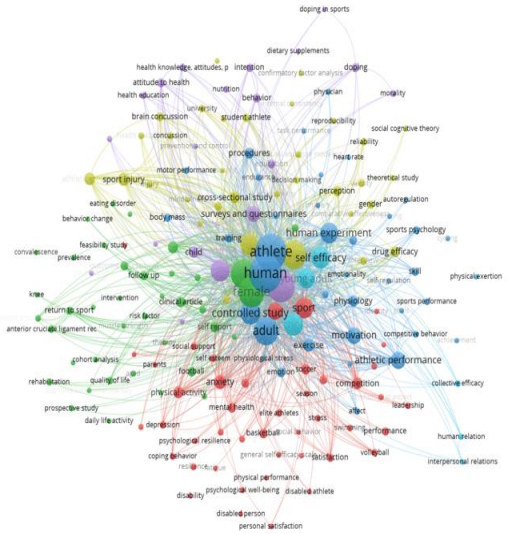

Figure 4. Occurring Keywords on Self-Efficacy in Athletes

In Figure 4, keywords are organized according to their level of relevance or interconnection. This keyword network visualizes the relationships between various research themes (Giannakos et al., 2020). Lines between keywords indicate the closeness of topics, while the size of the colored circles reflects the frequency of each keyword's occurrence. The larger the circle for a keyword, the more frequently it appears in the research sample. The visualization in Figure 3 identifies six thematic clusters: (1) injury; (2) mental health; (3) performance; (4) doping; (5) health education; and (6) physical activity. The first cluster is represented by keywords such as *athlete, human, sport injury*, and *rehabilitation*. The second cluster includes *mental health*, *anxiety*, *depression*, and *well-being*. The third cluster consists of keywords such as *self-efficacy*, *athletic performance*, *motivation*, and *competition*. The fourth cluster contains *doping*, *morality*, *social cognitive theory*, and *doping in sports*. The fifth cluster includes *health education* and *behavior change*, while the sixth cluster consists of *physical activity*, *quality of life*, *follow-up*, and others.

The VOSViewer application enables the visualization of topics that evolve over time. In Figure 5, the colors blue, green, and yellow represent the publication time periods of articles, with blue indicating earlier periods, while green to yellow depict more recent publications.

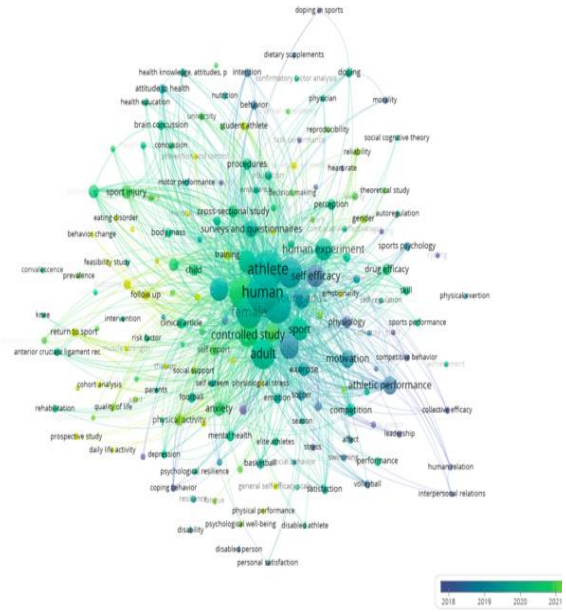

Figure 5. Years of Publication with Frequently Occurring Keywords in Self-Efficacy Research on Athletes

The overlay visualization shows that most keywords with the most recent publication dates (indicated in yellow) originate from cluster 1, located on the left side of the map. In contrast, clusters 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 group keywords with earlier average publication years, visualized in green and dark blue.

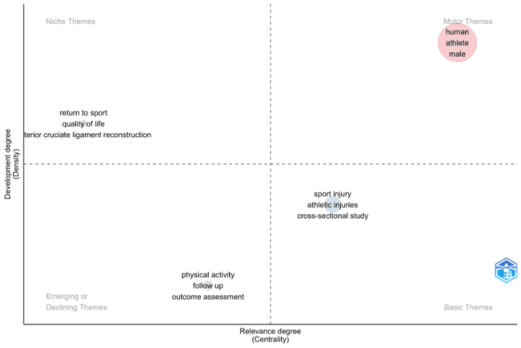

Figure 6. Theme Development in Self-Efficacy Publications on Athletes

The thematic mapping chart shows four quadrants that group various themes based on two dimensions: centrality (degree of relevance) and density (degree of development). In the upper-right quadrant, which includes Motor Themes, keywords such as *human*, *athlete*, and *male* are found, indicating themes that are highly relevant and well-developed in research. The upper-left quadrant, representing Niche Themes, includes topics such as *return to sport*, *quality of life*, and *anterior cruciate ligament reconstruction*, which, while well-developed, tend to have more limited general relevance. In the lower-right quadrant, Basic Themes are identified, with topics such as *sport injury*, *athletic injuries*, and *cross-sectional study*, which are highly relevant but not yet fully developed. Finally, in the lower-left quadrant, Emerging or Declining Themes are present, including topics

like *physical activity*, *follow-up*, and *outcome assessment*, indicating that these themes are in the early stages of development or may be declining in research relevance.

DISCUSSION

This study focuses on a systematic analysis of the emerging research literature, particularly regarding self-efficacy in athletes, using bibliometric analysis methods. Based on the results obtained, the following discussion will address the research questions.

Based on the research results displayed in Figure 1, it is evident that scientific publications related to self-efficacy in athletes fluctuated from 2014 to 2024. Overall, there is a significant upward trend in the number of articles, especially in recent years. In the early period, from 2014 to 2017, the number of articles varied, peaking in 2015 with 24 articles, then declining to a low of 18 articles in 2017. However, starting in 2018, a steady increase is observed. The year 2019 marked an important point with 34 articles published, a number that remained stable through 2021. The upward trend continued in 2022, reaching 40 articles, and culminated in 2024 with 52 articles. This growth in productivity indicates that the topic of self-efficacy is becoming increasingly relevant in the context of sports, especially with the rising complexity of challenges athletes face in modern competition. This increase may be driven by various factors, such as enhanced collaboration among researchers or emerging needs in the mental and physical development of athletes across different levels of competition.

The *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* has the largest contribution in terms of the number of articles, with 18 articles comprising 19% of the total publications. Other journals, such as *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* and the *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, also stand out with 16 and 10 articles, respectively, indicating that self-efficacy in athletes has become a key focus in the scientific literature on sports psychology and public health. Based on citation counts, articles published in the *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine and Science in Sports* have the greatest influence, with a total of 269 citations, followed by articles from *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, which received 254 citations. The

significant impact of these articles highlights that self-efficacy plays an important role in broader research on athletic performance, mental health, and psychological capacity development. The most active researcher in the field of self-efficacy in athletes is MJ Turner from Manchester Metropolitan University, with 8 publications. The most influential researcher, based on citation count, is Nikos Ntoumanis, whose article explores psychological and social aspects, such as self-efficacy, in the context of doping use Ntoumanis et al., (2014). Overall, these findings demonstrate that self-efficacy in athletes continues to be a significant focus in sports research, with a broad impact on the scientific literature related to sports psychology, physical health, and athletes' mental well-being.

The most frequently occurring keywords in studies related to self-efficacy in athletes were identified through data visualization analysis using VOSViewer. The most common keyword was "human," appearing 238 times, followed by "athlete" with 221 occurrences. Other frequently appearing keywords included "male" (157 times), "female" (155 times), "self-concept" (136 times), and "adult" (132 times). Additionally, keywords such as "controlled study" (91 times), "psychology" (90 times), and "adolescent" (84 times) were also common, reflecting dominant themes within this research.

This visualization also grouped keywords into six thematic clusters. The first cluster consists of injury-related topics, including keywords like "athlete," "human," "sport injury," and "rehabilitation." The second cluster focuses on mental health, with keywords such as "mental health," "anxiety," "depression," and "well-being." The third cluster groups keywords related to athletic performance, such as "self-efficacy," "athletic performance," "motivation," and "competition." The fourth cluster encompasses themes of doping, morality, and social cognitive theory. The fifth cluster is centered on health education and behavior change, while the sixth cluster relates to physical activity and quality of life.

The overlay visualization of these publications demonstrates temporal development based on the publication year. More recent articles (indicated in yellow) primarily appear in the injury cluster, highlighting an increased focus on research in the field

of sports injury and athlete rehabilitation in recent years. In contrast, other clusters, such as those focusing on mental health, athletic performance, and doping, have earlier average publication years, depicted in blue and dark green.

Overall, these findings indicate that self-efficacy in athletes is a continually evolving topic in scientific research, with growing attention to physical aspects such as injury and rehabilitation, alongside established topics like mental health and athlete motivation.

Based on thematic mapping, the research findings indicate that topics related to self-efficacy are divided into four quadrants based on two dimensions: centrality (degree of relevance) and density (degree of development). In the upper-right quadrant, known as Motor Themes, keywords such as *human*, *athlete*, and *male* are found. These themes stand out for being highly relevant and well-developed within the literature. This suggests that research on self-efficacy in athletes, particularly those involving human and gender factors, has become a central topic in scientific discussions and holds substantial influence in the field.

The upper-left quadrant, containing Niche Themes, includes topics like *return to sport*, *quality of life*, and *anterior cruciate ligament reconstruction*. Although these themes are well-developed, their general relevance is somewhat limited. This may indicate that, while specific and important in certain contexts, these topics have not yet gained widespread influence within self-efficacy research as a whole.

In the lower-right quadrant, Basic Themes such as *sport injury*, *athletic injuries*, and *cross-sectional study* are identified. These themes are highly relevant in research but are still in the early stages of development, indicating that while these topics are commonly used in research, they have not yet fully evolved into deeply explored areas of study.

Finally, the lower-left quadrant contains Emerging or Declining Themes, including *physical activity*, *follow-up*, and *outcome assessment*. These themes are either in the initial stages of development or may be declining in relevance. This could suggest that these topics may be losing attention in the current scientific

literature or are still in the early phases of research exploration.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of research on self-efficacy in athletes from 2014 to 2024, offering valuable insights into publication trends, influential contributors, and emerging research themes. The findings demonstrate a significant growth in research productivity, with a notable rise in publication frequency in recent years. Key contributors include journals such as the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* and *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, as well as leading researchers like MJ Turner and Nikos Ntoumanis, who have addressed critical issues such as doping, mental health, and motivation in athletes.

This study makes several unique contributions to the field of self-efficacy in sports. Unlike previous reviews, it is the first to systematically map this research area using bibliometric techniques, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to uncover prevailing themes and underexplored topics. The findings fill knowledge gaps by identifying areas such as injury rehabilitation and physical activity, which have received limited attention but are increasingly relevant. Moreover, the study highlights the growing focus on psychological and physical rehabilitation, emphasizing self-efficacy's pivotal role as a bridge between physical and psychological performance enhancement.

The implications of this study are significant for researchers, educators, and practitioners. The increasing attention to rehabilitation and psychological well-being underscores the need for interdisciplinary approaches that integrate sports science, psychology, and technology. By identifying the most influential journals, authors, and thematic clusters, this study provides valuable resources for academics seeking collaboration or publication in this field. These insights offer a roadmap for advancing research and practice in self-efficacy for athletes.

Future studies should build on this foundation by exploring the integration of digital tools and technology-driven programs to enhance self-efficacy in athletes. Additional in-depth analyses are needed to examine underrepresented topics such as self-

efficacy in injury recovery and return-to-sport programs. Expanding cross-disciplinary collaboration can further deepen understanding of the interplay between self-efficacy, performance, and well-being across various sports disciplines. These directions will help researchers address evolving challenges and opportunities in this domain.

In conclusion, this study not only maps the current state of research on self-efficacy in athletes but also provides novel insights into emerging trends and underexplored areas. Its contribution lies in offering a holistic understanding of the field and identifying pathways for future inquiry. By filling existing knowledge gaps and highlighting new research directions, this study enriches the literature and supports the ongoing evolution of self-efficacy research in sports.

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