

Available online at : <http://journal.unj.ac.id/unj/index.php/gjik>  
Gladi : Jurnal Ilmu Keolahragaan, 16 (04) 2025, 569-579  
Permalink/DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21009/GJIK.164.09>

## The Role of Social Media as a Support Medium for Independent Training for Student Athletes Post-COVID-19

Marvel Panjita Raja Oloan Pardede<sup>1\*</sup>, Surdiniaty Ugelta<sup>2</sup>, Septian Williyanto<sup>3</sup>,  
Mustika Fitri<sup>4</sup>, Mohammad Zaky<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup> Sports science study program, Faculty of sports and health education, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Jl. Dr. Setiabudi No.229, Isola, Kec. Sukasari, Kota Bandung, Jawa Barat 40154, Indonesia

Corresponding author. Email : [marvel.panjita@gmail.com](mailto:marvel.panjita@gmail.com)

(Submission Track: Received: 01-09-2025, Final Revision: 01-10-2025, Available Online: 27-10-2025)

**Abstract.** The post-pandemic era has transformed athletes' training habits, with social media emerging as a vital medium that supports independent training among student athletes. Despite its growing use, limited studies have examined its post-pandemic impact. This study aims to explore how social media contributes to athletes' motivation, consistency, and independence in training when traditional facilities have resumed. Method: Using a qualitative design, eight student athletes were purposively selected. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model to identify key themes. Findings reveal that social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube serve as alternative learning spaces for technical, physical, and mental training. They enhance flexibility, motivation, and engagement. Social media significantly supports self-directed learning and motivation, complementing conventional training methods while fostering independence, discipline, and innovation among student athletes in the post-COVID-19 context.

**Keywords:** Independent Training; Motivation; Social Media; Student Athletes



Copyright © 2025 Marvel Panjita Raja Oloan Pardede, Surdiniaty Ugelta, Septian Williyanto, Mustika Fitri, Mohammad Zaky

*This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Post-pandemic, the habit of independent training has had a significant impact on various aspects of life, including sports (Chan et al. 2021; Sayyd, Zainuddin, and Seraj 2021). Physical activities and sports training that were previously conducted in person on the field or at sports facilities have experienced various limitations due to social distancing policies (Villaquiran Hurtado et al. 2020; Virmasalo et al. 2023). Student athletes, as a group required to maintain performance and consistency in training, have also felt the impact of these restrictions (Harris and Maher 2023; Purc-Stephenson, Zimmerman, and Edwards 2022).

After the pandemic ended, independent training became the main alternative for student athletes to maintain their physical condition, skills, and motivation, even without direct supervision from coaches (Greenberg et al. 2022; Raiol, Sampaio, and Fernandes 2020). The rapid development of social media has changed the way student athletes access, share, and learn information related to training (Park, Williams, and Son 2020; Poniatowski and Johnson 2023). Currently, social media is not only used as a means of communication, but also as a learning platform and support for independent training (Choudhary et al. 2020; Sri Rizki 2023). Amidst the busyness of lectures and training schedules, social media provides flexibility for student athletes to remain consistent in training and maintain motivation, despite having limited time and direct interaction with coaches (Martoredjo 2023; Ramlan, Ridzuan, and Ilyas 2023).

Although more and more young athletes are utilising training content on social media, scientific understanding of this phenomenon is still limited (Merrill and Faustin 2023). Several preliminary studies show that social media can serve as a source of motivation and training variety, especially during the pandemic when opportunities for direct training with coaches have decreased (Shirotriya et al. 2024). Through easy access to video tutorials, technique demonstrations, and training programmes from various professional sources, student athletes can tailor their training to their individual needs and schedules (Agha-Alinejad et al. 2022).

This flexibility not only allows student athletes to train more independently, but also fosters self-discipline and provides space to explore techniques more freely (Bi et al. 2022). Based on the article 'Using Social Media: A Breakthrough to Encourage Generation Z Athletes in Independent Training during the COVID-19 Pandemic' by Fitri,

Anwar and Ramadhan (2023), it appears that previous studies have focused more on the use of social media by Generation Z athletes in maintaining their independent training routines during the pandemic. However, studies on the role of social media as a support for independent training in the post-pandemic context are still limited (Xiong et al. 2020). The article focuses on the conditions when social restrictions were in place, while in the post-pandemic period, the dynamics have changed because access to training facilities, coaching guidance, and competitions has returned to normal.

Based on this description, this study is important to determine the extent to which social media plays a role as a means of supporting independent training for student athletes in the post-pandemic situation, when access to sports facilities and coaching guidance has been restored. The purpose of this study is to explore how social media is used to obtain training information, maintain motivation, improve training consistency, and serve as a space for interaction and inspiration for student athletes (Demir 2022). In addition, this study also aims to identify whether the role of social media is still significant in supporting independent training or only serves as a complement to traditional training methods, thereby providing a more comprehensive picture of the integration of digital media in the training patterns of student athletes in the post-COVID-19 era (Suyudi 2023).

Thus, this study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how social media contributes to improving the quality of training, motivation, and consistency of student athletes in maintaining their performance in the post-pandemic era.

## **METHOD**

This study utilises a qualitative approach with the aim of understanding a phenomenon in depth through the collection of descriptive data, such as words, actions, and situations that occur naturally (Oranga and Matere 2023). This approach emphasises the meaning, perceptions, and experiences of the research subjects, rather than numbers or statistical data. In this method, the researcher acts as the main instrument directly involved in the data collection process through in-depth interviews (Busetto, Wick, and Gumbinger 2020).

There were eight participants in this study, who were selected using purposive sampling (Campbell et al. 2020). The selection criteria focused on student athletes who actively use social media as a means of supporting independent training.

**Table 1.** Participant Data

| <b>NAME</b> | <b>AGE</b> | <b>SPORT ROLE</b> |
|-------------|------------|-------------------|
| S1          | 20         | Pencak Silat      |
| S2          | 22         | Football          |
| S3          | 20         | Pencak Silat      |
| S4          | 21         | Indoor Hockey     |
| S5          | 19         | Swim              |
| S6          | 19         | Diving            |
| S7          | 19         | Athletics         |
| S8          | 20         | Athletics         |

Data analysis was conducted using an approach commonly used in qualitative research, namely interactively and continuously from the data collection process to the drawing of conclusions (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana 2018; Sembiring, Sukmayadi, and Sunaryo 2025).

The data was presented in the form of descriptive narratives to facilitate researchers in identifying patterns and relationships between themes. Furthermore, conclusions were drawn by interpreting the meaning of the analysed data and verifying it through comparison with field findings so that the research results had high validity and credibility. Through the Miles and Huberman technique, researchers were able to identify main themes such as motivation, independence, and social interaction that emerged from the interview results, then systematically compile them to produce comprehensive conclusions about the role of social media in supporting independent training for student athletes.

**Table 2.** Interview Questions

| <b>No.</b> | <b>QUESTIONS</b>   |
|------------|--|
| 1.         | Which social media platform do you use most often to support your independent practice? (Instagram, YouTube, TikTok) |
| 2.         | What type of training content is most useful for you? (Technical, Physical, Mental)                                  |
| 3.         | How much time per day do you spend on independent practice? (1 hour, 2 hours, 3 hours)?                              |
| 4.         | Does social media content help students learn and develop an interest in physical activity? (yes, no)                |

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Use of Social Media by Student Athletes**

Based on interviews with several student athletes from various sports, such as team sports, martial arts, athletics, and aquatics, it was found that social media plays a significant role in supporting independent training activities after the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the interviewees admitted to actively using Instagram as their main medium for finding training technique references and getting inspiration from professional athletes. One interviewee (S2) stated, ‘I use Instagram because my coaches are mostly millennials, so not all of them use social media other than Instagram.’

Instagram is considered a platform that reaches various generations, making it easier for coaches from different generations to monitor the training activities of athletes. In addition, several sources also mentioned TikTok as a medium that is often used in independent training because it presents short videos with creative and easily accessible training variations. Another informant (S4) revealed, ‘I use TikTok most often because now there are more training variations.’ These findings show that social media has transformed into a non-formal learning resource that helps student athletes maintain consistency in training outside of the official training schedule.

In addition to Instagram and TikTok, YouTube was also mentioned as a platform widely used by several sources, particularly in certain sports that require more in-depth guidance. A respondent (S5) stated, “YouTube, because for aquatic sports, the training information is very comprehensive.” Thus, this study confirms that the use of social media in independent training is highly beneficial, although each individual chooses different platforms. The primary focus of this study remains on the role of social media in supporting the independence of student-athletes’ training in the post-pandemic era.

### **Types of Independent Training Content for Student Athletes**

The type of content considered most useful for student athletes is content related to technique and mental skills, as these two aspects are the main factors tested during competitions. One of the sources (S7) stated, ‘Technique, because it allows for visualisation, and usually training schedules clash with class schedules, so learning technique on social media can be a substitute.’ These findings show that the clash between academic and training schedules often leads student athletes to use social media as an alternative to continue training independently without neglecting their academic

obligations or sporting achievements. Thus, social media serves as a means of supporting the balance between academic demands and athletic skill development.

In addition to technical aspects, mental training is also considered to play an important role in supporting the performance of student athletes. One source (S8) revealed, 'Mental strength, because even if your technique and physical condition are good, if your mental strength declines, your physical condition and technique will automatically decline as well.' This confirms that mental strength has a major influence on training consistency and match readiness, so mental training through motivational or reflective content on social media is an important part of an athlete's self-development strategy.

Meanwhile, although each athlete has different physical conditions, several sources also admitted to using social media to train their physical abilities independently. One source (S1) stated, 'Physical training, because physical abilities can be adjusted according to one's own desires.' This finding shows that physical training remains an aspect that is no less important than technical and mental training, as it helps athletes adjust their physical abilities to the needs of optimal performance.

### **Duration of Independent Practice**

The duration of social media use to support independent training varies between one and two hours per day, depending on each athlete's class schedule and training intensity. This time is generally used to watch, take notes, or practise training material obtained online. One of the sources (S3) stated, 'I train independently for about two hours so that I don't finish too late at night, because I have class schedules in the morning and afternoon.'

These findings indicate that student athletes are able to flexibly manage their time between academic obligations and training activities. Although all respondents are active athletes, they remain committed to maintaining a balance between their academic and training responsibilities. The use of social media allows them to continue training independently without disrupting their academic schedules, while maintaining consistency in their performance as athletes.

### **The Impact of Social Media as a Support Medium for Independent Practice**

Social media now has a significant positive impact on the world of sports, particularly in supporting athletes' independent training. These platforms are considered

increasingly informative, practical, and efficient in providing a variety of relevant training references. One source (S1) said, 'It's useful because it can foster interest and enjoyment by allowing people to appear on social media and show their personal abilities, which is also useful for others.'

Independent training through social media not only helps with self-development, but can also be a source of motivation for other athletes to remain enthusiastic and consistent in their training. Resource person (R2) added, 'It's useful because I get a lot of inspiration other than from my coach.'

Social media also plays a role in opening up new insights and inspiration for athletes through a variety of useful content. This was conveyed by the source (S3), 'It is useful because every coach has different techniques, and one technique can be done in various ways, so content on social media helps us learn new things.' In some sports, such as martial arts, technique is a major aspect of the judges' assessment. Therefore, the variety of technical content on social media is considered very helpful. Resource person (S4) also emphasised, 'It is useful because we now live in a digital world, and social media is important for increasing knowledge and motivation for independent training.'

As time goes by, social media continues to develop technologically, making it an increasingly adaptive learning resource. Resource person (S5) said, 'It is useful because through learning activities on social media, I can see other athletes who are more skilled.' Through this content, athletes can motivate each other and learn from one another. This is in line with the statement from source (S6), 'It's useful because we can motivate ourselves to stay enthusiastic and see whether our movements are correct or not.'

Independent training through social media also serves as a self-evaluation tool for athletes. They can rewatch certain techniques and adjust them based on their coach's advice. Source (S7) explained, 'It's useful because after every training session, there is an evaluation from the coach, so after training, I can see the correct movements on social media, especially since the coach doesn't always meet with us.' In this context, social media even acts as an additional coach that helps athletes train when they are not on the field.

Finally, the source (S8) emphasised the importance of self-control in using social media, 'It's useful because we now live in a digital world, and if we follow positive trends, it will be beneficial for us.' Although social media has the potential to display negative

content, athletes realise the importance of focusing on educational and constructive content, so that its use continues to provide maximum benefits for improving their skills and motivation.

This study shows that the role of social media as a support for independent training for student athletes has a broader scope than previous studies, which generally only highlight the function of social media as a means of communication or promotion of sports activities. The results of this study reveal that social media is not merely a means of sharing information, but also plays a direct role in the process of learning technical skills, strengthening physical abilities, and building athlete motivation (Sivakumar, Jayasingh, and Shaik 2023; Stoicescu and Stanescu 2018). These findings show that student athletes have been able to strategically utilise social media to deepen their knowledge and improve their training performance without relying entirely on coaching guidance.

In addition to serving as a source of information, social media has also been proven to increase motivation and consistency in training. Access to various content such as inspirational videos, professional athletes' training routines, and interactions in online sports communities fosters enthusiasm and a sense of responsibility to continue training (Gadiet and Deutsch 2020; Heinrich et al. 2022). The sources in this study admitted that social media provides positive encouragement and a healthy sense of competitiveness, as they can compare, assess, and monitor their progress through the content they access every day.

Thus, it can be concluded that social media not only serves as a means of supporting information but also as a builder of motivation, independence, and consistency in training for student athletes in maintaining their performance in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that social media plays a very important role in supporting independent training for student athletes in the post-COVID-19 era. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube not only serve as a means of communication, but also as interactive and easily accessible learning media, allowing athletes to obtain training references, learn new techniques, and improve their physical fitness and mental readiness independently. Through diverse and inspiring content, social media helps athletes maintain consistency in their training despite time constraints, academic schedules, and a

lack of direct guidance from coaches. In addition, social interactions in the digital world encourage motivation, confidence, and a healthy competitive spirit among student athletes. Thus, the use of social media not only complements traditional training methods but also acts as a catalyst in creating more flexible, independent, and self-development-oriented training patterns. Overall, the integration of social media into training activities demonstrates a positive transformation in the world of modern sports, where digital technology serves as a bridge between learning, motivation, and the continuous improvement of athletes' performance.

## REFERENCES

- Agha-Alinejad, Hamid, Amir Hossein Ahmadi Hekmatikar, Ruheea Taskin Ruhee, Mahdiah Molanouri Shamsi, Masoud Rahmati, Kayvan Khoramipour, and Katsuhiko Suzuki. 2022. "A Guide to Different Intensities of Exercise, Vaccination, and Sports Nutrition in the Course of Preparing Elite Athletes for the Management of Upper Respiratory Infections during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Narrative Review." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 19(3). doi:10.3390/ijerph19031888.
- Bi, Ran, Danyang Gao, Xianzhou Zeng, and Qiang Zhu. 2022. "LAZIER: A Virtual Fitness Coach Based on AI Technology." In *2022 IEEE 5th International Conference on Information Systems and Computer Aided Education, ICISCAE 2022*, doi:10.1109/ICISCAE55891.2022.9927664.
- Busetto, Loraine, Wolfgang Wick, and Christoph Gumbinger. 2020. "How to Use and Assess Qualitative Research Methods." *Neurological Research and Practice* 2(1). doi:10.1186/s42466-020-00059-z.
- Campbell, Steve, Melanie Greenwood, Sarah Prior, Toniele Shearer, Kerrie Walkem, Sarah Young, Danielle Bywaters, and Kim Walker. 2020. "Purposeful Sampling: Complex or Simple? Research Case Examples." *Journal of Research in Nursing* 25(8). doi:10.1177/1744987120927206.
- Chan, Joel Ern Zher, Angela Lee, Chris Lease, and Nicola Spurrier. 2021. "Recommencement of Sport Leagues With Spectators at the Adelaide Oval During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Planning, Experience, and Impact of a Globally Unprecedented Approach." *Frontiers in Public Health* 9. doi:10.3389/fpubh.2021.676843.
- Choudhary, Abu, Swati Anand, Setu Mehta, Abu Choudhary, Siddharth Bhesania, Rishi Thaker, Stephen J Peterson, and Parag Mehta. 2020. "Using Social Media as a Dynamic Supplement to Traditional Teaching." *Journal of Integrative Cardiology Open Access*. doi:10.31487/j.jicoa.2020.04.08.
- Demir, Gökalp. 2022. "Spor Bilimleri Fakültesi Öğrencilerinin Sosyal Medya ve Sosyal Ağları Kullanımı." *Gaziantep Üniversitesi Spor Bilimleri Dergisi* 7(1). doi:10.31680/gaunjss.1072440.
- Fitri, Mustika, Saepul Anwar, and Muhamad Hanif Ramadhan. 2023. "Using Social Media: A Breakthrough to Encourage Generation Z Athletes in Independent Training during the COVID-19 Pandemic." *Annals of Applied Sport Science* 11(3).

- doi:10.52547/aassjournal.1197.
- Gadiet, Weston, and Joe Deutsch. 2020. "A Systematic Approach to Athletic Development." *Journal of Human Sciences* 17(4). doi:10.14687/jhs.v17i4.5942.
- Greenberg, Elliot, Eric Greenberg, J. Todd Lawrence, and Theodore Ganley. 2022. "Understanding Youth Athlete Motivation, Training, and Activity Progression During and After the COVID-19 Sports Interruption." *International Journal of Sports Physical Therapy* 17(7). doi:10.26603/001c.40372.
- Harris, Brett R., and Brianna M. Maher. 2023. "Student-Athlete Mental Health, Help-Seeking, and Service Utilization: Implications for a Multi-Tiered, Public Health Approach on College Campuses." *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy* 37(4). doi:10.1080/87568225.2022.2109548.
- Heinrich, Katie M, Brady K Kurtz, Meg Patterson, Derek A. Crawford, and Adam Barry. 2022. "Incorporating a Sense of Community in a Group Exercise Intervention Facilitates Adherence." *Health Behavior Research* 5(3). doi:10.4148/2572-1836.1124.
- Martoredjo, Nikodemus Thomas. 2023. "Social Media as a Learning Tool in the Digital Age: A Review." In *Procedia Computer Science*, doi:10.1016/j.procs.2023.10.555.
- Merrill, Sarah, and Marcia Faustin. 2023. "Likes and Hashtags: Influence of Athlete Social Media Use." *Sports Psychiatry* 2(4). doi:10.1024/2674-0052/a000060.
- Miles, M B, A M Huberman, and J Saldana. 2018. *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*. SAGE Publications. <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=fjh2DwAAQBAJ>.
- Oranga, Josephine, and Audrey Matere. 2023. "Qualitative Research: Essence, Types and Advantages." *OALib* 10(12). doi:10.4236/oalib.1111001.
- Park, Jin, Antonio Williams, and Sungwook Son. 2020. "Social Media as a Personal Branding Tool: A Qualitative Study of Student-Athletes' Perceptions and Behaviors." *Journal of Athlete Development and Experience* 2(1). doi:10.25035/jade.02.01.04.
- Poniatowski, Kelly, and Kirsten Johnson. 2023. "Infusing Media Analytics Content into a Communications Curriculum: Partnering with Athletics Using Experiential Learning." *Communication Teacher* 37(4). doi:10.1080/17404622.2023.2227263.
- Purc-Stephenson, Rebecca J., Thomas M.J. Zimmerman, and Rachel Edwards. 2022. "Motivation to Train during a Pandemic: The Role of Fitness Resources, Mental Health, and Motivational Profiles among Student-Athletes in Team Sports." *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living* 4. doi:10.3389/fspor.2022.954086.
- Raiol, Rodolfo de Azevedo, Andrew Matheus Lameira Sampaio, and Igor Daniel Batista Fernandes. 2020. "Alternativas Para a Prática de Exercícios Físicos Durante a Pandemia Da COVID-19 e Distanciamento Social." *Brazilian Journal of Health Review* 3(4). doi:10.34119/bjhrv3n4-247.
- Ramlan, Aini Faezah, Abdul Rauf Ridzuan, and Ilya Yasnorizar Ilyas. 2023. "Impact of Social Media Influencers to Promote Healthy Lifestyle Behaviour: A Review from the Self-Determination Approach." *Journal of Business and Social Review in Emerging Economies* 9(1). doi:10.26710/jbsee.v9i1.2518.
- Sayyd, Sameer M., Zainal Abidin Zainuddin, and Prodhana M. Seraj. 2021. "A Scientific Overview of the Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Sports Affairs: A Systematic Review." *Physical education of students* 25(4). doi:10.15561/20755279.2021.0403.
- Sembiring, Piter, Yudi Sukmayadi, and Ayo Sunaryo. 2025. "Collaborative Music Learning: Utilizing n-Track Application in Private Music Education." *Jurnal*

*Kependidikan: Jurnal Hasil Penelitian dan Kajian Kepustakaan di Bidang Pendidikan, Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran* 11(2): 679.  
doi:10.33394/jk.v11i2.15002.

- Shirotriya, Awadhesh Kumar, Kishore Mukhopadhyay, Deepti Joshi, and Rakesh Vishwakarma. 2024. "Student's Physical Activity Engagement through Social Media: A Study in COVID-19 Lockdown." *E-Learning and Digital Media*. doi:10.1177/20427530241239398.
- Sivakumar, Arunkumar, Sudarsan Jayasingh, and Shahenaz Shaik. 2023. "Social Media Influence on Students' Knowledge Sharing and Learning: An Empirical Study." *Education Sciences* 13(7). doi:10.3390/educsci13070745.
- Sri Rizki, Juni Wati. 2023. "Social Media as Tools of Communication and Learning." *QALAMUNA: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial, dan Agama* 15(1). doi:10.37680/qalamuna.v15i1.2429.
- Stoicescu, Marius, and Monica Stanescu. 2018. "SOCIAL MEDIA AS A LEARNING TOOL IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS AREA." In *14th International Conference ELearning and Software for Education*, doi:10.12753/2066-026x-18-193.
- Suyudi, Imam. 2023. "The Digital Revolution in Sports: Analyzing the Impact of Information Technology on Athlete Training and Management." *Golden Ratio of Mapping Idea and Literature Format* 3(2). doi:10.52970/grmilf.v3i2.343.
- Villaquiran Hurtado, Andrés Felipe, Omar Andres Ramos, Sandra Jimena Jácome, and Maria del Mar Meza Cabrera. 2020. "Actividad Física y Ejercicio En Tiempos de COVID-19." *CES Medicina* 34. doi:10.21615/cesmedicina.34.covid-19.6.
- Virmasalo, Ilkka, Elina Hasanen, Janne Pyykönen, Marisofia Nurmi, Mikko Simula, Anna Katriina Salmikangas, and Petteri Muukkonen. 2023. "Closed Due to COVID-19: Effects of Indoor Sports Restrictions on Suburban Adults' Physical Activity Behaviours." *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics* 15(2). doi:10.1080/19406940.2023.2178479.
- Xiong, Jiaqi, Orly Lipsitz, Flora Nasri, Leanna M.W. Lui, Hartej Gill, Lee Phan, David Chen-Li, et al. 2020. "Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Mental Health in the General Population: A Systematic Review." *Journal of Affective Disorders* 277. doi:10.1016/j.jad.2020.08.001.