

Review

Evolution of scientific research on padel: A systematic review from 2022 to 2025

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Abstract: Padel has become one of the most popular racket sports worldwide, showing rapid growth in both participation and scientific output. This systematic review examines research on padel published between January 2022 and August 2025. Variables examined include the evolution of the number of publications, main research lines, sample characteristics, players' sex, country of origin, aside from the most prominent authors and journals. Searches were conducted in Web of Science, PubMed, and Google Scholar, identifying 188 articles. Results reveal a marked increase in publications, surpassing 50 annual outputs since 2024. Performance indicators emerged as the predominant research focus (35.64%), followed by physical parameters (14.36%), reviews (12.77%), and injuries (10.64%). Half of the studies analyzed professional players, while research also extended to amateur and youth categories. Regarding sex, most studies included both genders (74.55%), though 23.07% examined only men and just 2.36% focused exclusively on women. Spain and Italy accounted for 90% of publications, with five leading authors contributing to 42% of the total output. Padel Scientific Journal was identified as the main reference journal. Overall, these findings provide an updated overview of the evolution of padel research, underscoring its rapid expansion while also revealing significant gaps that could guide future investigations.

Keywords: racket sports; scientific output; PRISMA; bibliometric analysis



1. Introduction

Padel is a racket sport that originated in Mexico in 1969 (Sánchez-Alcaraz, 2013). It is played on a 20 × 10 m court divided by a central net and enclosed by metallic mesh and glass walls measuring three to four meters in height. These surfaces are an active part of the game, as the ball can rebound off them during rallies (International Padel Federation, 2025b).

Since its creation, padel has experienced remarkable international growth. The International Padel Federation currently reports the existence of 87 national federations worldwide (International Padel Federation, 2025c). In Spain, the number of federated players has exceeded 100,000, making padel the racket sport with the highest number of licenses (Martín-Miguel, Moreno-Holguera, et al., 2025). This widespread popularity has been linked to multiple cognitive, social, and competitive factors that generate intrinsically positive experiences for players (Pérez-Muñoz et al., 2024; Rodríguez-Cayetano et al., 2023), as well as feelings of well-being, happiness, and satisfaction (Díaz-García et al., 2019), all of which encourage participation.

This growth has been directly reflected in the scientific production related to padel, which has increased significantly over the past decade (Sánchez-Alcaraz et al., 2023). Several studies have reported a steady rise in publication volume from 2010 to 2021 (Denche-Zamorano et al., 2024; Sánchez-Alcaraz et al., 2023). Consequently, several literature reviews have been conducted across different research areas, including performance indicators (Martín-Miguel et al., 2023), physiological, physical, and

anthropometric parameters (Cádiz-Gallardo et al., 2025; Martín-Miguel, Escudero-Tena, et al., 2025), health and injuries (Dahmen et al., 2023), padel in youth players (Martín-Miguel, Muñoz, et al., 2025), leading researchers and research lines up to 2022 (Denche-Zamorano et al., 2024), as well as the characteristics and impact of padel in Spain (Villena-Serrano et al., 2016). In addition, several doctoral theses have contributed to a deeper understanding of the sport (Villena-Serrano et al., 2017). Altogether, these research areas have enabled a multidimensional understanding of padel, significantly enriching the scientific landscape of the discipline.

In this regard, analyzing the scientific production of a sport through quantitative methods, including variables such as authors, publication year, journals, research topics, and number of studies (Villarejo et al., 2010), constitutes a fundamental tool for identifying the activity, structure, and evolution of a field of knowledge, as well as for quantifying its outcomes (Alcaín & San Millán, 1993). In the case of padel, only Sánchez-Alcaraz et al. (2023) have examined the scientific production up to 2021. However, the ongoing growth of padel at both national and international levels (International Padel Federation, 2025c; Martín-Miguel, Moreno-Holguera, et al., 2025) underscores the need to update the available knowledge on the current state of research in this sport, in order to understand the evolution of its main areas of study and to provide a more recent and comprehensive overview.

To address this gap, the present study conducted a combined bibliometric

analysis and systematic review of padel research published between 2022 and 2025. This dual approach enabled a quantitative mapping of publication trends and research structures, together with a qualitative synthesis of the most recent scientific contributions. Specifically, we examined the annual evolution of publications, study typologies, including research areas, sample characteristics, and participants' sex, the main journals and researchers contributing to the field, and the key findings reported in studies published during this period. This integrated methodology offers an updated and comprehensive overview of the development of padel research and identifies emerging thematic directions not documented in reviews prior to 2021.

2. Materials and Methods

Study Design - this study followed a systematic review design in accordance with the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines (Cartwright-Hatton et al., 2004). The literature search was conducted in the Web of Science, PubMed, and Google Scholar databases, restricting the search to articles published between January 2022 and August 2025. Google Scholar was included as a complementary source to capture emerging padel research not yet indexed in major databases, particularly early-view articles, regional publications, or studies from journals recently incorporated into indexing services. All records retrieved through Google Scholar were screened using the same eligibility criteria applied to the other databases. The following Boolean syntax was applied in the search process: (concept 1) ("pádel" OR "padel" OR "paddle" OR

"paddle-tennis") AND (concept 2) ("performance" OR "injury" OR "injuries" OR "psychology" OR "education") AND (concept 3) ("physical parameters" OR "physical fitness" OR "review" OR "systematic review" OR "assessment tools" OR "measurement instruments" OR "sociology" OR "social factors" OR "physiology" OR "physiological parameters" OR "training load" OR "sports science" OR "biomechanics"). The literature search was independently performed by two reviewers (Iván Martín-Miguel and Diego Muñoz).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria - the inclusion criteria were as follows: (i) articles published from January 2022 onwards; (ii) only original research articles or review papers published in peer-reviewed scientific journals; and (iii) studies specifically focused on padel. Conference abstracts, doctoral theses, and congress communications were excluded.

Identification and Selection of Studies - the search and selection process is summarized in the PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1). The initial search yielded a total of 389 articles. After screening titles and abstracts to remove duplicates as well as studies outside the target publication dates and sample characteristics, 169 articles were excluded, leaving 220 for the next phase. Subsequently, after assessing full-text eligibility based on methodological rigor and relevance to the research question, an additional 25 studies were excluded, resulting in 195 remaining articles. Of these, 7 were later removed because they were books or conference papers, resulting in a

final total of 188 articles included in the review.

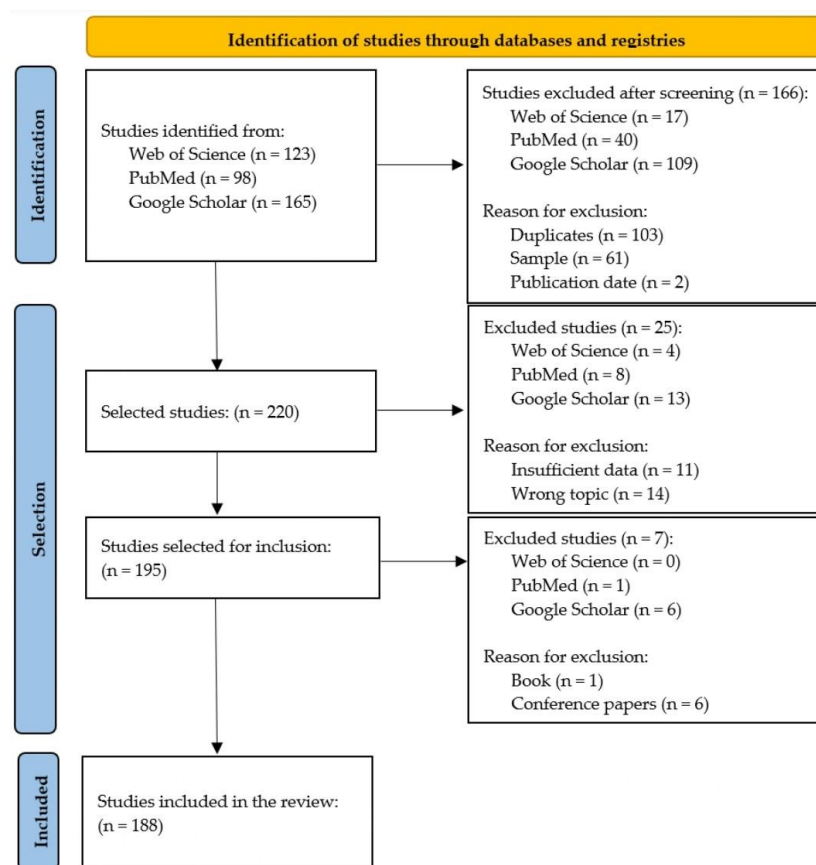


Figure 1. PRISMA flowchart.

3. Results

Figure 2 illustrates the evolution in the number of publications on padel over the years, from January 2022 to August 1, 2025. As shown, the number of publications increased steadily, reaching 36 in 2022 and remaining relatively stable in 2023 (39 publications). A marked growth occurred in 2024, with 62 publications, while 51 papers have already been reported in 2025, suggesting that the trend in publication output remains consistent with previous years and may even continue to rise.

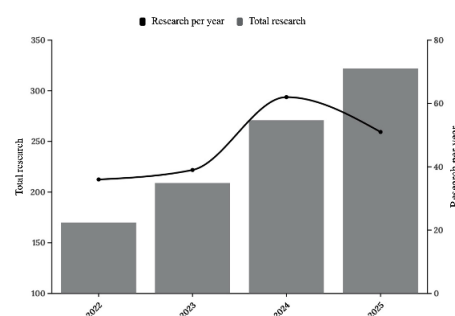


Figure 2. Trends in total and annual research.

Table S1 presents the descriptive analysis of the main research parameters in padel. The predominant research area corresponds to the analysis of performance indicators, accounting for approximately one-third of the total scientific output, followed by studies on physical parameters, injuries, and

systematic reviews. Regarding the analyzed samples, most studies focus on professional players, followed by those involving amateur athletes, with fewer including participants from both competitive levels. In terms of sex, most investigations examine both genders (74%), while a notable proportion focuses exclusively on male players (23%). Finally, at the geographical level, Spain stands out as the leading country in padel-related scientific production, followed by Italy, consolidating both as the main contributors to research in this field. Complete information on all the studies is presented in Table S1.

Figure 3 shows the ten journals with the highest number of publications on padel, from a total of 75 identified journals, along

with the topics they address. Among them, *Padel Scientific Journal* is the leading outlet, with 31 articles (16.58% of the total), distributed across eight thematic areas: psychology, sociology, education, physical parameters, systematic reviews, physiology, performance indicators, and instrument validation. It is followed by the *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, with 16 publications (8.56%), primarily focused on physiological parameters, reviews, physical parameters, and performance indicators. In third place, *Applied Sciences* includes 10 articles (5.35%) centered on physiology, performance indicators, physical parameters, and validation of instruments.

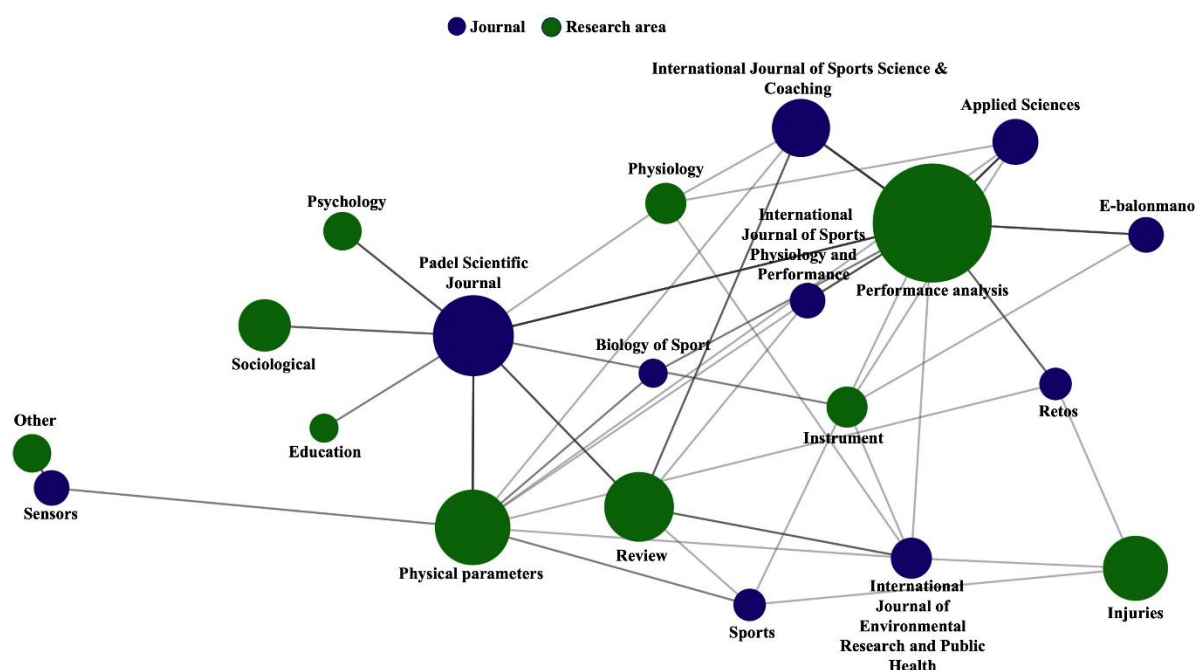


Figure 3. Distribution of research volume by journal and its link to the main areas of research in padel.

Figure 4 displays the ten most prolific padel researchers. The most productive author is Diego Muñoz, with 69 publications, followed by Adrián Escudero-Tena (59), Bernardino Javier Sánchez-Alcaraz (59), Rafael Conde-Ripoll (33), and Iván Martín-

Miguel (32). At least one of these five authors appears in 42% of all publications, consolidating them as leading figures in padel research. Their main research lines include performance indicators, instrument validation, review studies, and physical parameters.

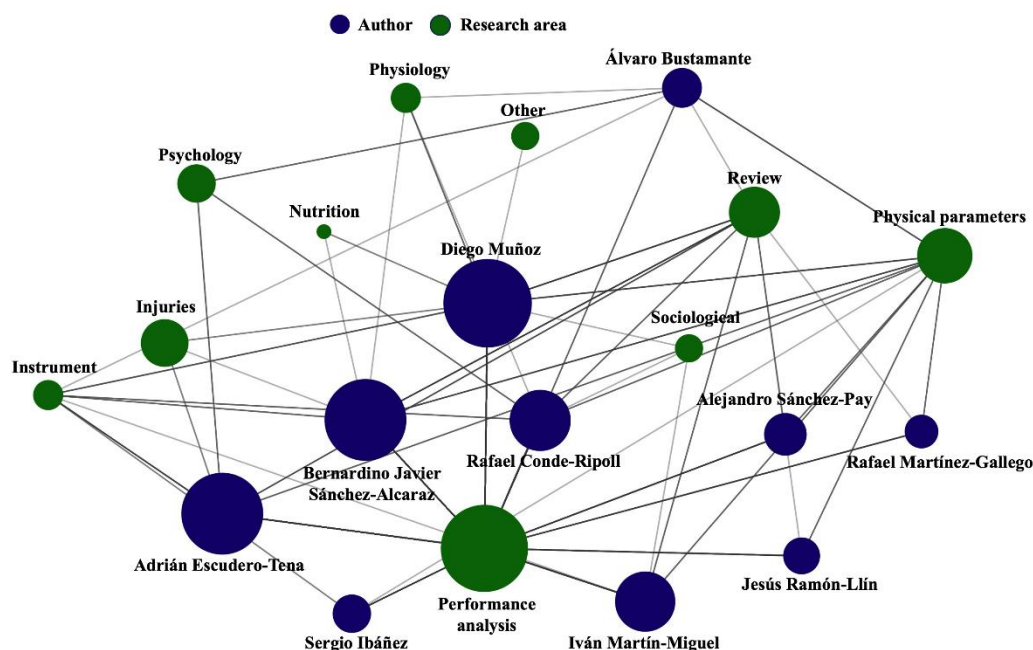


Figure 4. Distribution of research volume by author and its link to the main areas of research in padel.

4. Discussion

The present study conducted a bibliographic review of padel research published between 2022 and 2025. The analysis covered annual publication trends, study typologies (thematic areas, samples, and participant sex), leading journals and researchers, and the main scientific contributions. Overall, the results provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of padel research, highlighting key advances and persisting gaps in the literature.

The evolution in publication volume shows sustained and marked growth since 2024, reaching 322 articles to date and an average of more than 50 publications per year over the past two years. These findings confirm the upward trajectory previously reported by Sánchez-Alcaraz et al. (2023), who observed an average of 15 annual publications between 2017 and 2021. Thus, the expansion of padel

is not only evident in participation and federative development (Martín-Miguel, Moreno-Holguera, et al., 2025) but also in scientific production, which has nearly doubled its annual output in recent years.

In terms of research focus, performance indicators remain the most extensively investigated topic, consistent with earlier trends (Sánchez-Alcaraz et al., 2023). Within this domain, game actions predominate over temporal parameters, outcomes, and player movements (Martín-Miguel et al., 2023). This line of research reflects a growing interest in optimizing performance through technical-tactical analysis, with direct implications for training and competition. Recent studies have identified relevant patterns: approximately 40% of points are resolved in the middle area of the court (Ramírez-Ortega et al., 2025), volleys and *bandejas* are the most frequent strokes (Conde-Ripoll et al., 2025), and volleys and smashes are the

most common finishing actions (Prieto-Lage et al., 2024). Together, these findings establish fundamental performance trends that can inform training design and tactical decision-making in padel.

The second and third major research areas identified in recent years concern physical parameters and injuries. Regarding physical aspects, studies indicate that padel competition does not induce high levels of neuromuscular fatigue, as players have been shown to improve vertical and horizontal jump performance after matches (Bustamante-Sánchez et al., 2024). Additionally, upper-limb asymmetries have been reported (Delgado-García et al., 2022), together with differences in physical capacities depending on the playing side (Ortega-Zayas et al., 2024). These findings provide a basis for designing individualized training and recovery programs tailored to the specific demands of each player.

Concerning injuries, a higher incidence has been observed among women than men (Pérez et al., 2023), with tendinopathies and contusions being the most prevalent (Thomas et al., 2023). The elbow, knee, and lumbar region are the most frequently affected areas (Ryman Augustsson & Lundin, 2023). Collectively, these studies offer a sound foundation for targeted prevention programs aimed at minimizing injury risk in the most vulnerable regions. Together, the growing evidence on physical and injury-related parameters contributes to building a scientific framework that supports the adaptation of training strategies and the optimization of competitive performance.

With respect to the type of samples analyzed, most studies have focused on

professional players. This predominance is likely due to the large number of tournaments organized by the International Padel Federation (International Padel Federation, 2025a) and the accessibility of official match footage, which facilitates performance analysis in elite contexts. Nevertheless, studies involving amateur players have shown a slight increase compared with the 27.3% reported in 2021 (Sánchez-Alcaraz et al., 2023), suggesting growing interest in this population. Considering the technical-tactical and physical differences between professional and amateur levels (Escudero-Tena et al., 2025; Fernández de Ossó et al., 2025), further research is needed to promote more individualized training approaches. Conversely, research on players under 18 years of age remains scarce ($\approx 9\%$), despite its relevance for understanding athlete development. As emphasized by Martín-Miguel, Muñoz, et al. (2025), expanding studies in youth categories is essential to establish solid foundations for technical and physical preparation.

Regarding sex, although most studies include mixed samples, research remains predominantly focused on male players, with very few studies centered exclusively on women. Yet, existing evidence has identified significant sex-based differences in physiological (Martín-Miguel, Escudero-Tena, et al., 2025), health-related (Pérez et al., 2023), physical (Pradas et al., 2025), and game-performance parameters (Fernández De Ossó et al., 2025). However, few investigations have specifically analyzed the technical-tactical characteristics of female players. Moreover, several studies examining particular

aspects, such as stroke effectiveness (Conde-Ripoll et al., 2024) or technical actions like the serve (Mauro et al., 2025), have been conducted exclusively with male samples. This gap highlights the need to replicate such research in female populations to broaden current knowledge and support evidence-based training approaches in women's padel.

The main researchers identified during the analyzed period were Diego Muñoz, Adrián Escudero-Tena, Bernardino Javier Sánchez-Alcaraz, Rafael Conde-Ripoll, and Iván Martín-Miguel, with Spain emerging as the leading country in scientific production. Among them, Muñoz and Sánchez-Alcaraz stand out as the most prolific authors. However, newer contributors such as Adrián Escudero-Tena, Rafael Conde-Ripoll, and Iván Martín-Miguel, absent in previous bibliometric analyses (Denche-Zamorano et al., 2024), have recently gained prominence, reflecting a progressive diversification of the research landscape, although output remains concentrated among a limited number of scholars. Similarly, the range of publication venues has expanded: in addition to previously dominant journals such as *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *Retos*, and *Apunts. Educación Física y Deportes*, recent years have seen the inclusion of *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, *Applied Sciences*, and the *Padel Scientific Journal*, the latter encompassing the widest variety of research topics.

Overall, this review provides a clear overview of the evolution and current trends in padel research, serving as a useful

resource for guiding future investigations. The sustained growth observed in recent years underscores the consolidation of padel as a legitimate scientific field, with increasing potential to attract funding and institutional support. Furthermore, analyzing research areas, sample characteristics, and author networks facilitates the identification of knowledge gaps, particularly concerning female and youth populations, and supports the establishment of collaborations and suitable publication strategies. Collectively, these findings offer a practical framework for strengthening, diversifying, and professionalizing scientific production in padel.

Despite these contributions and the continuous growth of scientific production in padel, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the limited amount of available research still restricts the depth of analysis possible in certain thematic areas, making it difficult to establish robust comparative conclusions across studies. Additionally, the concentration of publications among a small group of recurring authors reduces the diversity of perspectives and weakens the potential for interdisciplinary connections within the field. Finally, the uneven distribution of studies across populations, particularly the scarcity of research focused on women and youth players, limits the generalizability of current findings and highlights the need for broader and more representative future investigations.

5. Practical Applications

The expanding and diversifying body of research on padel provides valuable insights for coaches, trainers, and sport scientists. Findings on performance indicators support the design of evidence-based training programs that integrate technical, physical, and psychological dimensions, enhancing both performance optimization and injury prevention. The inclusion of amateur and youth samples allows for the development of age- and level-specific training approaches, while studies addressing sex differences contribute to more tailored interventions, despite the current lack of research focused exclusively on female players. Moreover, identified gaps, particularly in nutrition, highlight opportunities to generate practical guidelines for performance and recovery. Finally, the growing internationalization of padel research fosters knowledge exchange and methodological standardization, supporting the sport's professionalization and multidisciplinary development.

6. Conclusions

This review highlights the significant increase in scientific production on padel, confirming the exponential growth reported in previous studies and showing that the number of publications has doubled compared to earlier years.

Research areas have diversified, providing a broader understanding of the sport from multiple perspectives. Although performance indicators remain the predominant focus—due to their direct application to technical-tactical training and competition—other domains, such as

injuries, physical parameters, and psychological aspects, have gained relevance. This growing body of research has also facilitated the publication of several bibliographic reviews, which have themselves become a relevant research topic. Nonetheless, notable gaps persist, particularly in nutrition, where more studies are needed to provide evidence applicable to practice.

In recent years, there has been greater heterogeneity in the samples analyzed, with a reduced predominance of professional players and a progressive increase in studies on amateur and youth populations. This shift enriches scientific knowledge by enabling more individualized proposals based on the characteristics of different player groups.

Regarding sex, mixed-sample studies allow identification of relevant differences between male and female players in physical, physiological, and health parameters. However, research exclusively focused on women remains scarce, especially in terms of performance, underscoring the need to advance this line of investigation to obtain more specific and applicable information.

Finally, while Spain continues to be the leading country in terms of publication volume, contributions from other countries are emerging, reflecting the growing internationalization of padel as a field of study. Likewise, the number of researchers in this domain has expanded, incorporating new authors not previously identified in bibliometric analyses, indicating growth not only in quantity but also in the diversity of the scientific community. The increasing number of journals publishing on padel

parameters further supports this trend. Overall, the relationships among authors, journals, and research areas reveal both the specialization of certain researchers in specific topics and the thematic orientation of the journals in which they publish.

Supplementary Materials: The following are available online at 10.21134/eurjhm.2026.56.6 where Table S1 is included.

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