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## **Challenges and Perceptions of Female Futsal Athletes on Gender Stereotype Issues**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to explore female futsal athletes' challenges and perceptions of gender stereotyping issues. Female futsal athletes often face social, physical, and psychological barriers stemming from the assumption that futsal is a masculine sport. This research used descriptive qualitative method with purposive sampling technique, involving 5 female futsal athletes from Venus Independent club. The research instruments were observation, in-depth interviews, and photovoice to comprehensively reveal the experiences and views of athletes. The results showed that gender stereotypes exert social pressure and affect athletes' self-confidence, but athletes are able to develop adaptive strategies to deal with them, such as improving self-quality and proving abilities through achievement. This study concludes that although gender stereotypes are still a significant challenge, female futsal athletes show resilience in the face of discrimination and form positive perceptions of their role in futsal sport. This research is expected to contribute in strengthening support for gender equality in sport, especially in futsal.

**Keywords:** Female Futsal Athletes, Gender Stereotypes, Challenges, Perceptions, Gender Equality.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In Indonesia, women's futsal has developed very rapidly and has many enthusiasts. In fact, the development of women's futsal can be said to go beyond women's football. Currently, Indonesia has a women's futsal national team that participates in international events, such as the SEA Games. In 2017, when the Indonesian women's futsal national team won a medal for the first time at the SEA Games. The women's futsal national team won a bronze medal at the SEA Games held in Thailand, which is also the first medal for women's futsal in Indonesia. This success has made women's futsal even more popular among Indonesian women. Now, more and more women

aspire to become women's futsal national team players or even play professionally in the Indonesian futsal league. (Dwi Praise Laksono , 2019)

The increasing involvement of women in certain sports, such as futsal, is evidence of positive progress in gender equality in sports. Despite the progress, female futsal athletes are still faced with strong gender stereotypes that consider the sport to be more suitable for men. Gender stereotypes are views or assumptions that are often unfair. Stereotyping is the idea that a group is judged inaccurately based on features or characteristics associated with that group. This stereotype is often used to justify discrimination, where women are perceived as weak and emotional, while men are perceived as strong and rational. This narrow and often misguided view of gender differences can have an impact on how individuals or groups are perceived and treated in society. These stereotypes often affect how people view athletes, especially women who participate in sports that are considered "masculine" such as futsal. These stereotypes inhibit women's participation and can affect their perception of themselves, and their desire to excel in sports. (Afifah, 2024) ( Women's sport , 2023)

As a result, many female athletes with great potential have to face negative views and discrimination, which can reduce the level of women's participation in the world of sport as a whole. In addition, women's futsal players also face many challenges. One of them is the pressure to maintain their feminine appearance while playing in an environment that is considered masculine. They try to balance their identity as athletes with social expectations of feminine behavior. (Chandra Wiguna , 2021)

Perceptions of female athletes' abilities are often lower than those of male athletes. This leads to discrimination and a lack of support from the community. Research conducted by (Womeninsport) with the title "*Sport, Stereotypes and Stolen Dreams Why Girls Still Feel They Don't Belong In Sport*". This is in line with the research by (Febriyanti G) entitled "Gender Injustice Due to Stereotypes in the Patriarchal System", the results of this study show that gender injustice in patriarchal society occurs because of gender-based stereotypes that are inherent from an early age through the socialization process. Research by (Knyazyan A) with the title " ( Febriyanti , 2022) *Gender Stereotypes In Sports Discourse*", the media often portrays male athletes with a focus on strength, while female athletes are more associated with beauty and emotion, reflecting traditional stereotypes. ( Knyazyan & Haytyan , 2024)

Gender stereotypes that consider futsal as a male sport can be a significant obstacle to the participation and development of female futsal athletes. As a result, female athletes often face challenges in the form of discrimination, lack of support, and demands to remain feminine despite being in an environment that is considered masculine. However, research that specifically discusses the challenges and perceptions of female futsal athletes on the issue is still limited.

Therefore, a more in-depth study is needed to understand how gender stereotypes affect them. The goal is to identify the main challenges faced by female futsal athletes, find out the perception of female futsal athletes towards gender stereotypes, and explore the attitudes and strategies they apply in overcoming gender stereotype barriers.

## **METHODS**

According to Lexy J. Moleong, research is essentially an effort to find the truth or to justify the truth. Efforts to pursue the truth are carried out by researchers through certain methods. Method is an instrument used by researchers to conduct research. The research method is divided into two, the qualitative research method and the quantitative research method (Prof. Dr. Lexy J. Moleong, 2017).

### **Types of research**

This type of research is a qualitative research with a descriptive method. Sugiyono, stated that qualitative research is a research method used to research on the condition of natural objects, (as opposed to experiments) where the researcher is the key instrument, the data collection technique is carried out in a triangulation (combined), data analysis is inductive, and the results of qualitative research emphasize meaning rather than generalization. Sugiyono also emphasized that in quantitative research using instruments to collect data or measure the value of the variables being studied, while in qualitative, researchers become instruments. Qualitative research instruments are people, a person can be an instrument, researchers must have a broad theoretical supply of insights. Qualitative descriptive methods are used to gain an understanding of the current situation. The researcher wants to present the data according to the current phenomenon and then provide a complete picture of the phenomenon. (Prof. Dr. Sugiyono, 2017) Qualitative descriptive research is a type of qualitative research because it involves life events or phenomena. (Rustamana, 2024)

### **Population**

This study involved female futsal athletes from the Venus Independent club as a population. The sample was determined through purposive sampling technique, by selecting five athletes who are active and have experience in the world of futsal.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

Data collection techniques with observation, in-depth interviews and researchers participate in the object being studied. The data collection technique in this study uses three different methods, namely observation, interview and (Prof. Dr. Sugiyono, 2017) *photovoice*.

1. Observations

The observation method is a data collection technique that is carried out by observing and recording the state or behavior of the object that is the object of the research. Observation involves the process of systematically observing and recording the phenomenon being studied. In a broader scope, observation is not only limited to direct observation, but can also be done indirectly. Observation is a data collection method in which researchers or collaborators record information based on what they see during the research process (Mhd Panerangan Hasibuan, 2023).

2. Interview

This research uses structured interview techniques, to obtain broader information with a lot but still directed to the core of the problem. The researcher has prepared a list of written questions as a guide during the interview process. Before being used in research, the instrument has been validated through an expert judgement approach by involving experts with academic backgrounds as well as scientific publications in the fields of futsal and sports education. The preparation of the grid is carried out using an expert judgement approach, involving relevant experts to ensure the quality and accuracy of the instruments. The interview guide is prepared based on indicators obtained from the theoretical study and the formulation of the research focus. The interview grid is presented in the following table

3. *Photo voice*

This method is used with the aim of encouraging the community and raising awareness of issues that are important to the community. Therefore, photovoice not only provides reports but also serves as a tool to encourage and increase the capacity of the community. This study uses the photovoice method to describe a situation where people still hold gender stereotypes towards women's futsal, or consider futsal as a sport that is more suitable for men. The photovoice procedure in this study involves interviews with women's futsal athletes, where they are shown content (comments/news) that contain public responses related to women's futsal activities. After that, the athletes' expressions when they saw the content (comments/news) were photographed, especially when they witnessed responses that reflected the gender stereotypes. (Febria Mandeka, 2023)

**Data analysis**

1. Data reduction

The amount of data obtained from the field is quite large, for that it needs to be recorded carefully and in detail. Reducing data means summarizing, choosing and choosing the main things, focusing on the things that are important, looking for themes and patterns. Researchers select relevant, important, and useful data. The selected data is adjusted to the research objectives and is used to present results and discussions. The reduced data will provide a clear

picture and simplify the data collection process for researchers.

## 2. *Display Data*

After the data is reduced, the next step is to display the data. It is most often used to present data in qualitative research with narrative texts. In this study, the data is presented descriptively through brief descriptions, charts, and relationships between categories. This descriptive presentation can be realized in the form of a narrative with a plot that is systematically arranged.

## 3. *Data Verification*

### a. *Triangulation*

Triangulation is a way of checking the accuracy of data in qualitative research by comparing different data collection methods or data sources to see for fit. This triangulation involves testing data from various sources with a variety of methods and timings.

### b. *Member check*

Member check is the process of checking data collected by researchers with data sources. The purpose of the member check is to ensure that the information obtained is in accordance with that provided by the data source. (Prof. Dr. Sugiyono, 2017)

### c. *Expert option*

*Expert Opinion* is asking for input from someone who is considered an expert in the field being researched to review the stages of research and provide direction or assessment of the problem being discussed. In this process, researchers can consult with supervisors to improve and improve the results of the research conducted.

## 4. *Interpretation of Findings*

The research findings are in the form of field data obtained through qualitative research in the form of data analysis. This data is very important to consider the suitability between field findings and relevant theories in the discussion of the research. In this case, the researcher analyzes the focus of the research, namely the main challenges faced by female futsal players related to gender stereotypes issues, women's futsal players' perceptions of gender stereotypes in futsal, attitudes and strategies used by female futsal athletes in dealing with gender stereotypes.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

This study involved 5 female futsal athletes of the Venus Independent club. To maintain the confidentiality and privacy of the informant, the names of the informants will be disguised. The characteristics of informants in this study are presented in the form of the following table: The selection of informants themselves in this study consisted of 1 category where the category was taken from female futsal athletes at the venus independent club who had participated in national or regional futsal tournaments and had at least 5 years of experience in futsal. Their experience will make this study even stronger with statements from informants to answer research questions.

Table 1

Characteristics of Informants

<b>Informants</b>	<b>Pseudonyms</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Long Play</b>
<b>1.</b>	God	23 Years	Pivot	9 Years
<b>2.</b>	Cells	21 Years	Pivot	8 Years
<b>3.</b>	Elisha	20 Years	Anchor	7 Years
<b>4.</b>	Retno	23 Years	Anchor	9 Years
<b>5.</b>	Ereene	22 Years	Pivot	7 Years

### **1. Challenges Faced by Women's Futsal Athletes**

Based on interviews with the five informants, it can be concluded that female futsal athletes face various challenges that come from biological, psychological, and social aspects. Widi, revealed that the toughest challenge she experienced was related to emotional fluctuations due to the menstrual cycle and age factors, considering that the competition in women's futsal is quite competitive with the presence of many senior players who are still active. A similar statement was also expressed by Retno who highlighted how menstruation affects their physical and emotional condition, thus impacting performance during training and matches. On the other hand, Sela revealed that women's futsal still does not get maximum support from the surrounding environment, because there is still an assumption that futsal is a sport for men. This stigma affects the motivation and enthusiasm of female athletes in developing their potential. In addition, there is also Ereene who highlights mental pressure as a challenge in itself, both from coaches, teammates, and opponents, who demand high mental resilience in order to be able to survive and develop in the world of futsal.

This shows that the challenges faced by female futsal athletes are not only physical, but also related to social barriers and cultural views that still limit women to freely develop in the

world of sports. The next interview will answer whether they have experienced treatment differently than men and tell examples. This question will be answered by 5 informants.

From interviews with five informants, the majority of female futsal athletes admitted that they had felt their abilities were doubted just because they were women. Three of them said that doubts about female athletes still often occur, both from the wider community and in competitive environments such as during team selection. Retno said that women are often considered physically weaker than men, so their abilities are often considered unfair. This was also conveyed by Sela who felt that assumptions such as "women don't need to go to high school or pursue achievements" were still firmly attached in society, and made her feel underestimated.

Even so, some of them actually use the experience as a trigger for the spirit to prove themselves. They see these doubts not as obstacles, but as motivation to continue to grow and show their abilities. Retno also added that the presence of the women's futsal national team and the increasing achievements of female athletes are clear evidence that women can also compete in the world of sports. Meanwhile, Widi has a different view. He felt that there was never any doubt because from the beginning men and women trained and competed in separate groups. According to him, because there is no direct comparison in a mixed team, the assessment of athletes' abilities is not too influenced by gender factors

## **2. Women's Futsal Athletes' Perceptions**

The five female futsal athletes from the Venus Independent club answered that stereotypes are actually their own encouragement to prove their abilities. Widi said that the doubts of others encourage him to perform better because there is a certain satisfaction when he can prove that their opinion is wrong. Sela also experienced the same thing, she believes that stereotypes push her to show that women are not weak figures or just suitable for working in the kitchen.

Elisa agreed, saying that the skewed assumption of female athletes encouraged her to come forward and show her ability. Retno added that because the women's futsal match system is different from men's futsal, the women's team usually plays with a longer group system. This makes him even more motivated. In addition, she believes that stereotypes do not need to be considered too much, as there is already a lot of evidence that women can succeed on various levels. Meanwhile, Ereene feels increasingly challenged and motivated to show her abilities, even once managed to beat several male players in futsal matches. This is proof that women can also compete and excel in the field.

## **3. Strategies and Attitudes of Athletes in Facing Gender Stereotypes**

Based on the results of interviews with five women's futsal players from the Venus Independent club, it can be concluded that they have high hopes for the future of women's futsal,

especially in terms of gender equality. These players hope that the notion that sports only belong to men can be removed, because according to them, both women and men have the potential to achieve. Some of the hopes that have arisen include the need to eliminate gender stereotypes that underestimate the abilities of female athletes. They emphasized that both women and men have the same potential to excel in the world of futsal. In addition, women's futsal is considered not only to rely on physical strength, but also strategy, intelligence, and teamwork that are not inferior to men's futsal.

In addition, the athletes hope that with the increasing breadth of information and support from various circles, the public can better understand and appreciate the existence of women's futsal. They realize that development has begun to be seen, but it still needs proof to be truly equal in the eyes of the community. The spirit to continue to show ability is the main strength for athletes in facing challenges related to gender stereotype issues. They also realize that there are differences between men and women, but that does not reduce the chances of achieving equal achievement. Thus, the future hopes of women's futsal related to gender equality issues include eliminating stereotypes, gaining greater support, and proving that women have the ability to compete with men in sports, especially futsal.

#### **4. Photovoice results**

The findings of the photovoice method show that women's futsal athletes of the Venus Independent club have a high awareness of the existence of gender stereotypes in society. When shown visual material in the form of netizens comments or discriminatory news, athletes responded with facial expressions and verbal statements that reflected disappointment, but also showed that it was a source of motivation for them. From the visual and narrative aspects, it can be seen that negative comments are not only understood as a form of injustice, but also as a challenge that encourages them to demonstrate their capacity through achievements and team cohesion. Photovoice captures athletes' emotional responses and positive attitudes to gender inequality in sport.

#### **Discussion**

##### **1. Challenges Faced by Women's Futsal Athletes**

Women's futsal athletes from the Venus Independent club face various complex challenges. From the physical side, they have to deal with natural conditions such as menstrual cycles that can affect their abilities in the field. In addition, they also face mental pressure due to high expectations from coaches and competition between fellow players. As explained in the study by Najwa Fadila C, some female athletes experience disturbances in the menstrual cycle, such as delays or even menstruation that occurs twice a month. Not only that, many athletes also experience physical complaints such as menstrual pain and back pain, which not

only interfere with daily activities, but also negatively impact performance during training and matches. This is in line with Fahrizal's opinion, which states that strenuous physical exercise can disrupt the balance of reproductive hormones, which in turn can cause menstrual cycles to become irregular in female athletes and impact their physical performance on the field. Research by Iwanda and Larasati also shows that high mental toughness can reduce athletes' anxiety levels when facing matches, so it is important for coaches to pay attention to the psychological aspects of athletes in preparation for competitions. (Najwa Fadila & Anita Kumaat, 2024) (Fahrizal, 2024)

In addition to physical and mental challenges, futsal also poses social and cultural problems. Many people still think that futsal is a sport for men, so female athletes often do not receive support from their families and the surrounding environment. They are often underestimated and considered not serious in pursuing this sport. Research by Firas Fadhlullah and Gina Tri Azizah shows that female athletes often face gender-based stereotypes as well as violence in the world of sports. Research by Venny Aulia Fasha Habali also shows that people's perceptions of gender equality are still influenced by myths and assumptions that women should not do strenuous activities, including sports. In addition, according to Yusub Triantoro, Lack of support from parents, both due to social and cultural factors, can weaken girls' motivation and participation in sports, which ultimately hinders their talent growth and achievement. (Fadhlullah, 2024) (Habali, 2023) (Triantoro, 2021)

## 2. Women's Futsal Athletes' Perception of Gender Stereotype Issues

Gender stereotypes in women's futsal come from a narrow view of society and a lack of understanding of gender equality in sports. Strenuous physical activity is still often associated with men, while women are considered to have no equivalent physical abilities. This is reinforced by Munandar, who found that women's participation in sport is often hampered by the notion that physical activity is synonymous with masculinity. In addition, Foekh stated that the stereotype is reinforced by the fact that women are underrepresented in sports media and leadership. The absence of a complete understanding of female athletes' abilities leads to non-inclusive support and coaching. Lack of education and changing perceptions of gender stereotypes are crucial to increasing women's participation in sports. (Munandar, 2024) (Risto Rolled Foekh1, 2024)

The women's futsal athlete of the Venus Independent club rejected the notion that futsal is a special sport for men. They believe that the achievements and commitment of female athletes have proven that sport should not be limited by gender. They also believe that sports are comprehensive and open to anyone. Research by Desita Lioni, shows that female athletes are able to show performance and abilities that are not inferior to men, but often do not get the

same spotlight. Meanwhile, Foekh, emphasized the importance of opening up leadership and coaching spaces for women to counter gender dominance in the sports system. ( Salistri , 2024) (Risto Rolled Foekh1, 2024)

### 3. Strategies and Attitudes of Athletes in Facing Gender Stereotypes

The results of this study show that female futsal athletes of the Venus Independent club still face discrimination and gender stereotypes, such as the notion that futsal is only suitable for men or that women are considered less physically strong. Derogatory comments and unfair treatment are still everyday challenges faced, but most athletes choose positive strategies such as proving their abilities through practice and achievement rather than retaliating directly. Some athletes rely on the development of confidence and mental strength in response to the pressure, while others choose to remain silent because they feel they do not have a safe space to speak up. These findings are in line with previous research by Fahmi Anas which highlighted how social constructs in patriarchal societies reinforce masculinity in sports such as futsal and marginalize women involved in them. Meanwhile, Silva said that the social pressure experienced by female futsal athletes can actually encourage the formation of mental toughness and the drive to prove one's abilities. These strategies show how female athletes respond to gender inequality in the world of sport by improving their abilities, increasing their mental strength, and continuing to achieve achievement. (Ernawati Stuart O'Neill , 2020) (Fortaleza & Silva, 2023)

The women's futsal athletes of the Venus Independent club apply various strategies to maintain confidence and achieve achievements, including focusing on the training process, arousing enthusiasm from within, and obtaining social support from the surrounding environment. Being consistent in practicing and remembering previous achievements is a source of encouragement when facing challenges. The supportive role of teammates, family, and coaches is also very important in fostering confidence and enthusiasm in facing pressure. Research conducted by Putrado and Hidayat, shows a strong positive relationship between social support and the confidence of futsal athletes. This is reinforced by Slimani's findings, which highlight that support from the surrounding environment, including coaches and families, plays a central role in forming mental resilience and maintaining a competitive spirit. Furthermore, according to Adrian, maintaining focus on long-term processes and goals has proven to be effective in increasing internal motivation while reducing stress. Meanwhile, Saleh added that physical exercise that is done consistently not only has a positive impact on the body's abilities, but also provides great psychological benefits. Research shows that a structured exercise program can help lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depression, while

improving overall well-being and quality of life. (Putrado & Hidayat, 2023) (Hase), 2019) (Saleh, 2019)

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that female futsal athletes still face various challenges related to gender stereotypes. These challenges include the assumption of people who consider futsal as a special sport for men, the lack of support from the surrounding environment, and the limited facilities and infrastructure available. In addition, physical challenges and mental stress are also part of the daily challenges they experience in carrying out their role as futsal athletes. However, women's futsal athletes are able to show resilience and high fighting spirit in facing these various stereotypes. They interpret futsal as a form of self-proof and are able to form a positive perception of themselves through their experience of competition, social support, and achievements. The strategies used are also diverse, ranging from improving technical skills, maintaining confidence, to utilizing social media to build a positive image.

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