



PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF WOMEN WHO PLAY FOOTBALL

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Abstract

This study aims to examine public perceptions of women participating in football, a sport that is still often viewed as deviating from traditional gender norms. The main focus of this research is to understand societal views regarding the presence of female athletes in the field of football and to identify the factors that influence these perceptions, both internal aspects such as knowledge, attitudes, and prejudice, as well as external aspects such as cultural and media influences. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach, conducted in Cipada Village, Cikalongwetan District. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and direct observations involving informants such as football coaches, parents of female players, and members of the general public. The findings reveal that although there is growing support from certain segments of the community, negative perceptions still persist, reflecting the deep-rooted gender stereotypes regarding women's roles in sports. This study is expected to contribute scientifically to the promotion of gender equality and the enhancement of social acceptance of women's participation in football.

Keywords: *Public perception, women, soccer, gender stereotypes, equality.*

INTRODUCTION

Sport is a forum to improve human resources, for most people exercising regularly and regularly can improve a person's physical and mental quality. In general, sports have a function to increase physical, mental, and spiritual freshness and are aimed at forming high attitudes, personalities, discipline, and sportsmanship. Meanwhile, specifically sports have the goal of achieving achievements (Putra and Saputra 2024). Exercise is a part of life as well as one of the important physical needs for humans. Sport is a form of human movement behavior that is carried out specifically in sports that have various directions and goals so that sport is a phenomenon that is relevant to social life for each person (Mahfud and Fahrizqi 2020). According to the Minister of Youth and Sports Maladi (1964-1966), sports include all human activities aimed at carrying out their life mission and life ideals, national political, social, economic, cultural ideals and so on. Exercise is an activity that makes you physically and mentally healthy and becomes something fun for someone who likes to exercise. One of the sports that is socially connected and can be done by various groups, old, young, male and female, is football (Salahudin and Rusdin 2020).

Football is something common among people of different backgrounds and ancestry, a bridge that connects economic, political, cultural and religious levels is known as football. So basically football is a sport that plays the ball using the feet. The main goal of this game is to score as many goals or scores as possible, which of course must be done in accordance with the conditions that have been set (Courtesy Qalbi Arridho¹, Padli², John Arwandi³ 2021). Football is a sport played by two teams consisting of 11 players each on a field measuring 90-120 meters long and 45-90 meters wide (Ani Pristiawati³ Rafi Fauzul Akbar¹ 2024). In the early days, the emergence of PSSI football was synonymous with something masculine. When women are involved in the game of football, it is considered unique, strange, unusual, even taboo. This makes the patriarchal society consider football only suitable for men to play. Nevertheless, women began to be interested in football, this can be proven by the emergence of female football players (Yunisal and Rismayanti 2019). The world of sports today is very fast-growing, becoming a sportsman is not only for men, but women also have the opportunity to make achievements in various sports (Supriadi 2021). Football is a very hard and rough sport in its game. Football players are required to run, grab the ball, clash with opponents, struggle on the field and so on. This is what makes the patriarchal society consider football only suitable for men to play, because women are considered weak creatures. The problem of gender equality also occurs in the scope of sports, including football (Ai Siti Nuraeni, Ane Rostiani, and Eldi Mulyana 2021).

Women's journey in sports often faces negative societal perceptions that limit their freedom. Perception, which begins with the capture of the five senses and develops into judgment, often distinguishes the roles of men and women in social, economic, and political aspects. This difference creates inequality and gender bias that are cultural and structural (Roziqin et al. 2019). According to Sugihartono, perception is the brain's ability to interpret stimuli received by the human senses. Differences in individual viewpoints can lead to positive or negative perceptions that affect a person's actions. Meanwhile, Bimo Walgito explained that perception is the process of organizing and interpreting stimuli to be meaningful, where the results are influenced by the attention, feelings, experiences, and thinking abilities of each individual (Jayanti and Arista 2019). These perceptions are influenced by internal factors, such as feelings, stigma, knowledge, myths, and experiences, as well as external factors in the form of stimuli and the environment. These factors can give rise to a negative view of women who are considered to be too hard to exercise, contrary to the principles of gender equality and women's emancipation. The awareness that the nation's progress is the result of the cooperation of men and women is a driver of changing people's perceptions (Habali et al. 2023). In fact, men and women are used to grouping in activities related to gender, including the selection of sports. Of course, there are many negative views of the community that state that women are not suitable to do football activities, because the sport is

a sport that relies heavily on everything related to the physical, such as strength, energy, muscles, and so on. So that the sport is always identified with men. However, if a woman chooses the sport, then this can weaken the feminine side that the woman has (Rifandi 2017).

Since a long time ago, many people considered women unsuitable for sports because it was considered contrary to their nature as housekeepers. The traditional view places women in domestic roles and men as breadwinners. As a result, women who are actively exercising, especially in risky sports such as soccer, are often judged to neglect household responsibilities. They also face stigma related to clothing, interactions with men, or body shapes that are perceived as damaging to image and honor. To deal with it, women need to have loyalty, dedication, sacrifice, and strong cooperation. This shows a social construct that still limits the role of women in sports. (Zani, Eri Barlian, and Padli 2023). Gender equality is still a global issue that continues to be fought, including in the field of sports. Men and women should have the same right to participate and have a professional career, but sports are still often considered a masculine activity that is more suitable for men than women (Dermawan, Dlis, and Mahardhika 2021). The patriarchal view considers football to be only suitable for men, because women are considered weak. As a result, there is an assumption that football can make women "like men", endanger their health, or that women are incapable and uninterested in competing. In this view, men are perceived as dominant and competitive, while women are expected to be obedient, gentle, and loyal (Scott, Scott, and Harsa 2024).

Referring to the description of the problem that has been explained earlier, this study aims to understand and uncover the public's perception of women who choose to play sports, especially football. This research will highlight how public perceptions can be a form of support that has a positive impact on female athletes in achieving achievements, as well as how these perceptions affect motivation, career sustainability, and recognition of their achievements in this often masculine sport. Related to the background of the problem raised, the researcher is interested in conducting a research with the title "Public perception of women who play football".

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method. According to Maleong in Mujahidin (2019:59), the qualitative method is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observed behaviors. This method is done with the direct involvement of researchers in the field and places more emphasis on process than results. The value of qualitative descriptive methods is not only in the knowledge produced, but also as a way to present and expand the understanding of research methods (Stuart 2013). This research uses a case study approach. According to Prof. Dr. H. Mudjia Rahardjo, M.Si, a case

study is a scientific activity that is carried out intensively, in detail, and in depth on a program, event, or activity in an individual, group, institution, or organization to gain an in-depth understanding. Generally, case studies examine events that are actual and unique, not those that have passed (Hidayat 2019).

The population in this study is the people of Cipada Village, Cikalongwetan District, who are related to women's football activities in their environment. Meanwhile, the research sample was determined by the *Qualitative snowball sampling*, is a form of purposeful sampling that usually occurs after the study begins and when the researcher asks participants to recommend another individual to be sampled (Booked, Uri, and Uri 2020). *A snowball sample, one selected as need arises during the conduct of a study*, snowball samples, which are selected according to the needs that arise during the conduct of the research (Fraenkel, Red Light District, and Hyun 2009). The initial sample consisted of local SSB football coaches, who then recommended parents of female players and other members of the community. This technique was chosen because this research is exploratory and requires participants who have direct experience or views on the phenomenon being studied.

The main instrument in this study is the researcher himself (human instrument) assisted by interview guidelines. Interviews are a form of data collection techniques that are widely used in descriptive research. The interview uses a set of questions that have been prepared by the researcher according to the formulation of the problem and the questions will be answered through the interview process. According to Kasmadi, interviews are a set of questions that must be answered by informants (Fatimah 2019). The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to provide flexibility in digging into data in depth according to the participants' responses. In addition to interviews, participatory observation and documentation are also used as additional data collection techniques to reinforce and complement the findings of the interview results.

In its implementation, this study uses three main techniques in data collection, namely 1. In-depth interviews with coaches, players' parents, and the general public. 2. Direct observation on the field, including seeing social interactions and women's football activities. 3. Study of documentation, such as photographs, interview transcripts, and literature references.

To maintain the validity of the data, the source triangulation technique and the reflectivity of the researcher are used. Triangulation was carried out by comparing data from various sources and data collection techniques, while reflexivity was used to critically review the position and influence of researchers in the data collection process.

RESULTS

The results of this study aim to find out the public's perception of women who play football. Based on the data collected through conversations, observations and documentation of the community in Cipada Village, the following results were obtained.

Name of the Informant : Dedi Rahmadi

Age : 49 Years Old

Supporting women to play soccer because it is beneficial. Women are considered not physically equal to men. Advantages: increase relationships. Disadvantages: prone to verbal abuse. The negative stigma still exists. The media is very influential. Culture doesn't have much of an impact. Family is very decisive.

Name of the Informant : Tatang Solomon

Age : 52 Years

A woman who has been accused of sexual harassment and harassment. Men's physique is superior. Women are rated better at teamwork. Flaws: physically weak, tomboy-looking. The stigma of "mischaracterization" affects the spirit. The media is very influential. Culture is very influential. Family support is essential.

Name of the Informant : Iman Iswanto

Age : 37 Years

Full support women playing ball. Women understand the instructions faster. Physical and mental weaknesses are weaknesses. Stigma arises from clothing. The media has a huge influence. The environment can be supportive or inhibiting. The role of the family is vital.

Name of the Informant : Nurpudin

Age : 37 Years

Women playing football are considered good. Abilities can be equivalent if trained. Advantages: high prestige. Disadvantages: negative outlook and potential deviations. The media is very influential. Environmental culture is decisive. Family support is indispensable.

Name of the Informant : Aan Hasanah

Age : 40 Years

Women don't agree with playing football because they are considered unnatural. Women are considered more regular but physically weak. Pros: good management. Disadvantages: lack of

physical practice. The stigma is still strong. The media is quite influential. Culture is restricting. Family is very influential.

Name of the Informant : Sumarni

Age : 55 Years

It does not fully support it, because it is considered risky for women. Women are considered soft and unsuitable on the field. Pros: confident and diligent. Disadvantages: Physically weak. The stigma of the community is still strong. The media does not show women's football. Culture tends to hold back. The role of the family is very important.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of interviews with several informants consisting of coaches, parents, and the general public, it was found that public perceptions of women who play football are still diverse. Most informants consider that football is a rewarding sport and can be played by anyone regardless of gender. However, on the other hand, some informants still hold the view that football is not a suitable sport for women because it is considered against female nature and high physical risks. Views on equality of ability are also different, where some believe that women have the same potential as men if they are trained well, but others think that physical differences make women's abilities not equal to men's.

In addition, social stigma still looms over women who play soccer, including the notion that women who play soccer will lose their feminine side or even be associated with gender deviations. Mass media is considered to have an important role in shaping public perception, but exposure to women's football is still lacking so that the public has not fully recognized and accepted female athletes. The cultural environment and family support also greatly determine the courage and opportunity of women to enter the world of football, where an environment that maintains prevailing traditions and a less supportive family is a considerable obstacle.

This research has several limitations that need to be conveyed as a consideration in interpreting the results and as a reference for future research. The first limitation lies in the number of informants involved, which is only six people consisting of coaches, parents, and the general public. Although the informants come from different backgrounds, the number is still relatively small and not able to represent the diversity of public perceptions as a whole regarding women's participation in the sport of football.

In addition, the scope of the research area is limited to Cipada Village, Cikalongwetan District, which is another factor that affects the generalization of the findings. The results of the study are strongly influenced by local cultural and environmental conditions which do not

necessarily reflect the perception of people in other regions with different social backgrounds and cultural values.

In terms of methodology, the qualitative approach used in this study makes the data obtained highly dependent on the personal experience and perception of each informant. Some informants seem to be cautious in giving answers, even tending to adjust them to applicable social norms, thus allowing for social bias that affects the authenticity of the data.

Another limitation is the time available for the interview process. Each informant was only interviewed once, which caused the researcher not to have enough opportunities to dig deeper or clarify unclear statements. This certainly has an impact on the depth of data and the power of analysis that can be carried out.

In addition, the lack of visual documentation is a weakness in this study. The limitations of the tools and the request of some informants not to be documented visually led to the absence of support in the form of photos or videos that should be able to enrich the presentation of data and increase the validity of qualitative research.

These limitations are expected to be important considerations in future similar research in order to obtain broader, more in-depth, and representative data.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research conducted in Cipada Village regarding public perception of women who play football, it can be concluded that the community is gradually showing a change in perspective that is more open to women's participation in sports that have been dominated by men. Public perception is no longer entirely based on traditional stereotypes that consider football to be a sport that only men deserve to play, but it is beginning to provide space for women to demonstrate their abilities in the field, especially when accompanied by real commitment, discipline and achievement.

However, there are still negative views that originate from social and cultural constructions that have taken root in people's lives. Stereotypes that football are rough, high-risk, and incompatible with women's nature are still an obstacle to building a full acceptance of female athletes. This negative perception is reinforced by internal factors such as the values adhered to, limited knowledge about gender equality, and the experiences of individuals who tend to be conservative. On the other hand, external factors such as local cultural norms, the influence of the social environment, and women's representation in the media also affect the formation of public opinions and attitudes.

However, this study also found that there is significant support from several elements of society, especially from nuclear families such as parents, as well as from coaches and the

surrounding environment, for women who pursue soccer. This support not only acts as a morale booster, but also a form of recognition of women's potential and rights to develop in the world of sports. The encouragement of a positive social environment is an important asset in eroding negative stigmas and shaping a climate that supports gender equality in sport.

Thus, it can be concluded that society's perception of women who play football is undergoing a shift towards a more inclusive direction. However, this transformation still requires more systematic and sustainable efforts in the form of public education, gender-sensitive training, and social campaigns that encourage acceptance of the diversity of women's roles. Collaboration between families, educational institutions, sports institutions, and the mass media is needed in creating a fair and equal space for women to actively participate and excel in football and other sports fields.

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