



# Perspectivas Sociológicas Sobre la Desigualdad de Género en Los Deportes Indonesios: una revisión sistemática de la literatura

*Sociological Perspectives on Gender Inequality in Indonesian Sports: A Systematic Literature Review*

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## Abstract

Gender inequality remains a persistent issue in Indonesian sports, where female athletes face systemic barriers in participation, leadership, funding, and media representation. Deep-rooted cultural norms and traditional gender roles limit opportunities for women, reinforcing male dominance in sports. Institutional neglect, inadequate funding, and lack of media coverage further exacerbate disparities, discouraging female participation at both grassroots and elite levels. Addressing these challenges is crucial for fostering inclusivity and ensuring equitable opportunities for all athletes. This study aims to analyze gender inequality in Indonesian sports through a systematic literature review, applying sociological theories such as Feminist Theory, Structural Functionalism, and Conflict Theory. Data were collected from academic journals, policy papers, and reports from sports organizations, focusing on sociological perspectives on gender disparities in sports. Qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis were used to synthesize findings and identify key patterns related to institutional, cultural, and media-driven gender biases. The findings reveal that institutional barriers, socio-cultural norms, and biased media representation significantly hinder gender equality in sports. Addressing these challenges requires policy reforms, increased funding for women's sports, and proactive media advocacy to promote female athletes. These insights contribute to broader discussions on gender equity in sports, offering recommendations for creating a more inclusive and equitable sports environment in Indonesia.

## Keywords

Gender Inequality, Sports Sociology, Female Athlete Representation

## Resumen

La desigualdad de género sigue siendo un problema persistente en los deportes indonesios, donde las atletas femeninas enfrentan barreras sistémicas en la participación, el liderazgo, la financiación y la representación de los medios. Las normas culturales profundas y los roles de género tradicionales limitan las oportunidades para las mujeres, reforzando el dominio masculino en los deportes. La negligencia institucional, la financiación inadecuada y la falta de cobertura de los medios exacerban aún más las disparidades, desalentando la participación femenina a nivel de base y élite. Abordar estos desafíos es crucial para fomentar la inclusión y garantizar oportunidades equitativas para todos los atletas. Este estudio tiene como objetivo analizar la desigualdad de género en los deportes indonesios a través de una revisión sistemática de la literatura, aplicando teorías sociológicas como la teoría feminista, el funcionalismo estructural y la teoría del conflicto. Los datos se recopilaron de revistas académicas, documentos de políticas e informes de organizaciones deportivas, centrándose en perspectivas sociológicas sobre las disparidades de género en los deportes. El análisis de contenido cualitativo y el análisis temático se utilizaron para sintetizar los hallazgos e identificar patrones clave relacionados con los sesgos de género institucionales, culturales y mediables. Los hallazgos revelan que las barreras institucionales, las normas socioculturales y la representación de medios sesgadas obstaculizan significativamente la igualdad de género en los deportes. Abordar estos desafíos requiere reformas de políticas, mayor financiamiento para los deportes femeninos y la defensa proactiva de los medios para promover a las atletas femeninas. Estas ideas contribuyen a discusiones más amplias sobre la equidad de género en los deportes, ofreciendo recomendaciones para crear un entorno deportivo más inclusivo y equitativo en Indonesia.

## Palabras clave

Desigualdad de género, deportes, equidad, participación femenina, políticas deportivas

## Introduction

Sports serve not merely as entertainment but as significant instruments for social integration, individual growth, and the enhancement of national identity (Urquidi et al., 2024). In Indonesian society, sports facilitate community bonding and promote healthy lifestyles, thereby fostering social cohesion across cultural divides. This function of sports becomes even more vital in a diverse nation like Indonesia, where positive engagement through sport can help bridge ethnic and regional differences. Additionally, the nation's commitment to fostering international competitiveness through improved sports infrastructure reflects its understanding of sports as a vehicle for both personal and national development, as advocated in literature highlighting sports' essential role in public health and social welfare (Ouyang et al., 2022)

However, the sports arena has been historically dominated by men, resulting in systemic obstacles for women seeking to participate and gain recognition in various sports disciplines (del Pilar Méndez Sánchez et al., 2023). Research exploring the nexus between gender and sports consistently reveals that cultural and institutional barriers often hinder women's access to sporting opportunities. The patriarchal norms embedded in sports culture shape not only participation rates but also influence the media portrayal of female athletes, perpetuating stereotypes that diminish women's achievements and capabilities in the sporting world (Shi, 2023). As highlighted in research examining gender dynamics within sports, these systemic challenges serve to reproduce broader societal inequalities that necessitate urgent reforms within sports governance and organizational structures to create equitable opportunities for all genders (Fletcher et al., 2024).

Addressing gender inequality in sports is crucial for the pursuit of social justice and inclusivity, which aligns with broader societal goals. Efforts to enhance women's participation can be seen as part of a larger movement towards recognizing the importance of diversity within sport (Spaaij et al., 2023). Initiatives promoting gender equity in sports contribute not only to individual empowerment but also to the integration of a more inclusive ethos within communities (Ouyang et al., 2022). Ultimately, the reformation of sports policies that incorporate gender considerations stands to benefit Indonesian sports as a whole, fostering a more equitable environment wherein all individuals can thrive, thus reinforcing the societal role of sports in advancing equality and justice (Saeed et al., 2024).

Gender inequality in sports is a pervasive issue that manifests globally, impacting women's participation, representation in leadership roles, and the coverage they receive across different platforms (Purnomo et al., 2024). Women remain underrepresented in leadership within various sports organizations and governing bodies. According to Evans and Pfister, the pathway to leadership for women in sports is hindered by systemic barriers that have historically favored male dominance within these organizations (Evans & Pfister, 2021). This disparity in leadership roles can be traced back to entrenched gender stereotypes that prioritize male athletes and executives, as demonstrated by the continued lack of women in decision-making positions across various sporting disciplines globally (Nkrumah et al., 2023). This phenomenon is further exacerbated by institutional practices that reinforce male-centered narratives in sports coverage, where women's achievements are often overshadowed by their male counterparts, contributing to a cycle of underappreciation and underrepresentation (Cooky et al., 2021).

The financial aspects of gender inequality further highlight the disparities faced by women in sports. Women athletes typically receive lower pay and fewer sponsorship opportunities compared to male athletes, a trend that persists despite notable efforts to bridge the gap through policy initiatives and advocacy. Research indicates that even in highly visible sports leagues, such as the Women's Super League in England, female athletes experience inequities in access to nutrition and support services, which are more readily available to male players (Horan et al., 2024). These financial inequalities not only impact immediate income but also have long-term effects on the overall development of women's sports, discouraging young female athletes from pursuing their passions due to the lack of accessible resources and support systems. As a result, policies aimed at promoting gender parity in pay and sponsorship opportunities remain crucial for fostering a more inclusive sports landscape (Parsons et al., 2024).

In addition to financial disparities, the way women's sports are portrayed in the media plays a significant role in perpetuating gender inequality. Coverage of women's sports is not only quantitatively lesser, but



the qualitative narratives often reflect stereotypical notions that question women's capacity to compete on par with men (Ihle, 2022). Data reveals that when women's sports do receive coverage, the stories often lack depth, focusing more on personal narratives rather than athletic achievements, thereby perpetuating a narrative that emphasizes femininity over athletic prowess (Cooky et al., 2021). This media bias, reinforced by existing socio-cultural norms, can significantly influence public perception, contributing to a reluctance among young girls to participate in sports due to fears of negative stereotyping (Yan, 2024). Thus, overcoming these biases in media representation is essential for changing societal perceptions surrounding women's capabilities in sports and fostering greater participation.

Cultural norms and gender stereotypes significantly impact women's opportunities for participation across the globe. In many cultures, traditional beliefs regarding femininity and male prowess discourage female participation in sports, leading to a systemic undervaluation of women's athletic abilities (Ihle, 2022). In developing regions, socio-cultural barriers can be particularly pronounced, where patriarchal structures may determine not only access to sports but also the types of sports considered appropriate for girls and women (Asghar et al., 2024). The perception that sports are a male domain inhibits both participation and investment in women's sports programs, contributing to a cyclical pattern of marginalization (Nkrumah et al., 2023). In response, various policies and initiatives have emerged globally, aimed at dismantling these barriers, such as community programs aimed at increasing female participation through scholarships and funding for girls' sports leagues.

Despite the challenges that exist, there is a growing recognition of the need for systemic changes to address gender inequity in sports. Programs focused on education and empowerment are increasingly being implemented to support women in sports leadership roles, as indicated by initiatives deriving from the Brighton Declaration, which encourage collaboration between men and women in sports environments (Lozano & González-Palomares, 2023). The progression toward gender equity in sports requires a multifaceted approach, where policy adjustments, media advocacy, and community engagement work in tandem to foster inclusive sporting spaces (Evans & Pfister, 2021). By dismantling traditional barriers and stereotypes that have long dictated the narrative around women's sports, there is potential for transformative change that not only recognizes the contributions of female athletes but also celebrates their roles as leaders and innovators within the sports community.

Gender inequality in Indonesian sports is characterized by significant disparities in participation rates, funding distribution, and institutional support for female athletes. A recent analysis reveals that women's participation in sports remains markedly lower than that of men, fueled by cultural expectations and systemic inequities. Financial support for women's sports is often inadequate, with resources predominantly allocated to male athletes and programs. This discrepancy leaves many female athletes without the necessary funding to train, compete, and develop their talents, hindering the overall growth of women's sports in Indonesia (Morgan et al., 2020). Furthermore, organizations often lack gender-sensitive policies, resulting in insufficient institutional backing for female athletes seeking pathways into competitive sports at both grassroots and elite levels (Araujo et al., 2022).

Traditional gender roles prevalent in Indonesian culture heavily influence female involvement in sports, often relegating women to domestic responsibilities and limiting their engagement in physical activities. Societal norms frequently dictate the appropriateness of sports for women, suggesting that participation in competitive sports goes against cultural expectations of femininity (Schaillée et al., 2021). This gendered perception of sports affects not only the willingness of girls and women to engage in athletics but also the societal support they receive from families and communities. Evidence indicates that parental and community engagement is more often directed towards encouraging boys in sports as opposed to girls, reinforcing gender disparities at an early age (Chu et al., 2022). Such traditional views continue to perpetuate the idea that athletic pursuits are less suitable for women, leading to a cycle of underrepresentation and marginalization in Indonesia's sporting landscape.

Moreover, female athletes in Indonesia encounter numerous challenges, including a lack of media exposure, inadequate financial support, and concerns regarding career sustainability in their sporting endeavors. Beyond gender-based inequalities, it is also essential to consider Indonesia's unique socio-cultural and racial context. As Indonesia is not part of the White Western Global North, female athletes face multiple layers of oppression, including structural barriers and societal biases that extend beyond gender discrimination. The media portrayal of women's sports is largely overshadowed by men's

competitions, further marginalizing female athletes and limiting recognition of their achievements (Cooky et al., 2021). This media bias not only affects sponsorship opportunities but also diminishes the potential for role models within women's sports, further discouraging young girls from participating (Morgan et al., 2020). Additionally, many female athletes struggle with the financial instability of their sports careers, often requiring secondary employment to support themselves while attempting to pursue athletic aspirations. This precarious situation is exacerbated by insufficient institutional support to help female athletes transition to post-competitive careers, indicating an urgent need for comprehensive strategies aimed at fostering a more equitable sports environment in Indonesia, centered around female empowerment and representation (Ogilvie & McCormack, 2021).

The sociological examination of gender inequality in sports can be enriched through various theoretical frameworks, including Feminist Theory, Structural Functionalism, and Conflict Theory. Feminist Theory emphasizes the structural inequalities and power imbalances that women face in traditional male-dominated environments such as sports (Evans & Pfister, 2021). It highlights how societal norms reinforce gender hierarchies, creating barriers that prevent women from achieving equality in sports participation and management. Reports indicate that the predominance of male narratives and the lack of visibility of female athletes in sports media perpetuate stereotypes that align women's identities with traditional roles, consequently undermining their achievements and contributions within the sphere of sports (Bfa, 2024). This theory is essential for understanding the deep-rooted societal biases that influence the accessibility and opportunities available to female athletes.

Structural Functionalism provides another lens through which to view gender inequality, focusing on how social institutions—like schools and sports federations—contribute to the reproduction of gender roles (Maridueña et al., 2024). From this perspective, the roles that institutions play can either reinforce or challenge existing gender norms. For example, educational systems can reflect patriarchal values that prioritize boys' sports and limit girls' participation. Similarly, sports federations may lack policies that promote gender equity, thus failing to support female athletes comprehensively. Consequently, these institutions become sites where gender inequality is both perpetuated and challenged, making it essential to evaluate their policies concerning gender inclusivity and representation (Evans & Pfister, 2021). The systemic barriers faced by female athletes can thus be attributed to the interplay between these institutions and culturally entrenched gender roles, showcasing the need for structural changes within sports governance.

Conflict Theory sheds light on the competition for resources and power within sports, illustrating how existing power dynamics favor male athletes and leaders. This theory posits that those in dominant positions create systemic barriers to marginalized groups, in this case, female athletes (Paccaud & Marcellini, 2022). In the Indonesian context, this is evident in the unequal distribution of funding and media coverage, where the spotlight remains predominantly on male sports, overshadowing female accomplishments and participation (Cooky et al., 2021). Additionally, dominant cultural narratives define what it means to be an athlete, often sidelining women and perpetuating a culture that views them as less capable or deserving of recognition in competitive sports. This analysis indicates that without concerted efforts to redistribute resources and influence public perception, female athletes will continue to face significant obstacles in their pursuit of equality within the sporting domain.

Conducting a systematic literature review on gender inequality in Indonesian sports is essential for understanding the multiple dimensions of disparity and identifying actionable paths forward. Previous research has revealed significant gaps in the sociological perspectives necessary to illuminate the challenges female athletes face in Indonesia, particularly in participation rates, funding, and institutional support (Gaedicke et al., 2021). Many existing studies focus narrowly on athletic performance or medical aspects of female sports participation, overlooking broader sociocultural factors that contribute to systemic barriers (Merodio et al., 2024). A comprehensive review can synthesize current data and theories while highlighting how traditional gender roles and societal norms influence women's sports participation, thus providing a clearer picture of the challenges at play (Ihle, 2022).

The need for an exhaustive analysis of existing research is underscored by the critical demand for evidence-based recommendations aimed at policymakers and sports federations in Indonesia. This review will not only collate existing data but also assess the effectiveness of current policies aimed at promoting gender equity within sports organizations (Paul et al., 2023). By employing a sociological lens, the review can reveal how institutional structures and cultural narratives perpetuate or challenge



gender disparities. Such insights are vital for informing strategies that foster gender inclusivity in sports, ensuring that female athletes receive equitable opportunities for development, support, and recognition within the sporting community (Chan et al., 2024).

Defining clear research objectives is necessary to guide this systematic literature review. Key aims include identifying sociological factors contributing to gender disparities, analyzing the efficacy of existing policies that promote gender equity, and providing insights that can influence future policy changes (Ihle, 2022). The importance of this research extends beyond the Indonesian context; it adds valuable contributions to the broader fields of gender studies and sports sociology (Uyar et al., 2022). By advocating for equal opportunities and raising awareness about the unique challenges faced by female athletes, this study aspires to generate meaningful discussions that can lead to progressive reforms within the sports ecosystem in Indonesia and potentially serve as a model for other developing nations facing similar challenges.

## Method

This study employs a scoping review methodology to examine gender inequality in Indonesian sports from a sociological perspective. A scoping review is an effective research method for mapping key concepts, identifying gaps, and synthesizing evidence from existing literature on a specific topic. This approach is particularly suitable for exploring complex and broad issues, such as gender disparities in sports, where multiple sociological perspectives and contextual factors intersect.

The data for this research is obtained from academic databases, government reports, policy documents, media articles, and books. The primary sources include peer-reviewed academic journals from Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, government reports from the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Indonesia, and international policy documents from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and UNESCO. In addition, media reports from reputable sources provide insights into contemporary gender issues in sports, while books and dissertations contribute theoretical perspectives on gender inequality.

A structured keyword search strategy was applied using combinations of terms such as gender inequality in Indonesian sports, women in sports sociology, barriers to female athletes, and gender policies in sports. This process ensured the inclusion of relevant literature from diverse sources.

To ensure relevance and quality, the study applied specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. Studies were included if they were published within the last five years (2019–2024), focused on gender inequality in sports, particularly in Indonesia or comparable regional contexts, and incorporated sociological theories such as Feminist Theory, Structural Functionalism, or Conflict Theory. Only peer-reviewed articles and reports from reputable institutions were considered. Studies with a purely economic or medical focus without sociological analysis and opinion-based or unverified sources were excluded.

A qualitative content analysis was applied to examine the selected studies. Using thematic analysis, key patterns and sociological explanations were identified. Comparative analysis was conducted across different sources to recognize common trends and contradictions in the literature. Furthermore, an interpretative synthesis was employed by applying Feminist Theory, Structural Functionalism, and Conflict Theory to explore the underlying causes of gender disparities in Indonesian sports.

To enhance clarity, the final dataset is summarized in a tabular format, categorizing studies by authors, publication year, key themes, and findings. This structured synthesis aims to propose strategies for addressing gender inequality in sports through policy recommendations and institutional reforms. By organizing the findings systematically, this study contributes to a



deeper understanding of gender disparities in Indonesian sports and highlights the need for inclusive policies to support female athletes.

## Results

Araújo et al. explored the sociodemographic inequalities impacting leisure-time physical activity among Brazilian adults from 2006 to 2019, focusing on gender disparities. They highlighted how social and cultural norms lead to higher involvement in household responsibilities among women compared to men, thus limiting opportunities for engagement in sports. The study emphasized that interventions to address gender inequality need to be initiated early, particularly noting that parental and institutional support for children's sports participation tends to favor boys over girls, reinforcing a cycle of inequality that begins at a young age (Araujo et al., 2022).

Roh and Chang conducted a study investigating the relationship between gender, social stratification, and sports participation rates among Korean adults, using data from the 2019 Korea National Sports Participation Survey. Their findings revealed a pronounced perception that extreme and physically demanding sports are predominantly male domains, while aesthetic-focused sports align more with female participation. This cultural narrative fosters negative attitudes towards women participating in sports requiring aggression and physical strength, perpetuating a gender-based hierarchy in sports participation (Roh & Chang, 2022).

Ihle applied the news-factor theory to assess how gender impacts the newsworthiness of sports coverage on German television. This research sought to provide insights into the reasons behind gender disparities in sports media representation. The application of the news-factors model indicated that gender serves as a moderating variable affecting how sports events and athletes are perceived regarding newsworthiness, thus informing gender bias within media coverage. The implications of this study may extend to similar patterns observed in Indonesian sports media, where coverage can often be gender-biased (Ihle, 2022).

Parsons et al. conducted a scoping review focused on gendered sports environments and their impact on the risk of anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injuries among women. This review, comprising 46 studies, highlighted that gender inequities are deeply embedded in the material conditions of women's sport environments, including inadequate funding and underrepresentation in coaching roles. Such systemic issues not only affect participation rates but also compromise the safety and well-being of women athletes, emphasizing the need for addressing gender disparities in sports infrastructure and supportive measures (Parsons et al., 2024).

Salvador et al. conducted a multidisciplinary review that sought to understand equality and diversity within sports environments, with significant focus on gender issues. The authors argue that the pervasive narrative around gender roles normalizes the segregation of sports into masculine and feminine categories, impacting not only participation rates but also the social acceptance of women in various sports roles. Their findings indicate that existing power dynamics and social discourses contribute to sustaining inequalities and suggest that addressing these narratives is essential for promoting greater inclusivity and diversity within sports institutions, particularly in contexts like Indonesia where traditional gender norms are pronounced (Esteban Salvador et al., 2022).

Sailofsky et al. examined gender disparities in academic publishing within the sport management field, revealing that female scholars continue to face considerable challenges in their professional advancement. Despite initiatives to promote gender equity in academic settings, the data indicate a persistent gap in publication rates between male and female

academics. The study suggests that systemic biases in peer review processes and publication opportunities hinder the visibility and career progression of women in the field. These inequities in academic publishing mirror broader issues of gender inequality in sports, where representation and recognition of female contributions remain limited (Sailofsky et al., 2023).

Cooky et al. analyzed historical trends of women's representation in televised sports from 1989 to 2019, documenting the profound persistence of gender disparities in sports media coverage. Their research highlights that women's sports events receive significantly less airtime than men's, perpetuating stereotypes and limiting the visibility of female athletes. The authors argue that media representation plays a crucial role in shaping societal attitudes toward gender in sports, influencing female athletes' opportunities and experiences. The findings suggest that in Indonesia, similar media dynamics may affect the recognition and support for women's sports.

Lord and Kavaliauskas focused on the underrepresentation of women in strength and conditioning roles, presenting a stark picture of gender disparities within this specialized area of sports coaching. Their research indicates that women occupy a mere 6–16% of strength and conditioning coach positions across levels, which not only limits women's professional opportunities but also creates an environment where male-centric training methods dominate. The study underscores the need for structural changes in how strength and conditioning coaching is approached, advocating for equitable practices that could enhance women's participation. The implications of these findings resonate with challenges faced in Indonesian sports, where similar disparities can be observed in coaching and training environments.

Figure 1 Previous Studies of Gender Disparities in Sports Participation

Reference	Authors	Year	Key Themes	Findings
Schaillée et al. (2021)	Schaillée et al.	2021	Generation Z, Inequality Perceptions	Examines Generation Z's perceptions of gender equality in sports. The study highlights that gaps in knowledge and experience contribute to ongoing inequalities.
Carretti et al. (2024)	Carretti et al.	2024	Empowerment, Gender Discrimination	Analyzes the experiences of female blind baseball players facing gender discrimination, emphasizing the role of sports in empowerment and challenging gender norms. The study has implications for women in Indonesian sports.
Ihle (2022)	Ihle	2022	News Coverage, Gender Bias	Investigates how gender influences the presentation of sports news in German media, demonstrating systemic biases relevant to the representation of women's sports in Indonesia.
Pape & Schoch (2022)	Pape and Schoch	2022	Governance, Organizational Change	Examines how sports organizational structures can perpetuate gender inequality. The findings are relevant to sports governance in Indonesia.
Salvador et al. (2022)	Salvador et al.	2022	Diversity, Equality	Provides a multidisciplinary perspective on diversity in sports, detailing how gender segregation is socially normalized, which is also evident in the Indonesian sports context.
Sailofsky et al. (2023)	Sailofsky et al.	2023	Gender Equity, Academia	Investigates gender disparities in sports management and academic publishing, with implications for gender equity discourse in Indonesian sports.
Cooky et al. (2021)	Cooky et al.	2021	Media Representation	Discusses long-standing issues of women's representation in sports broadcasting over 30 years, correlating with how sports are valued and perceived in Indonesia.
Lord & Kavaliauskas (2022)	Lord and Kavaliauskas	2022	Coaching, Women in Sports	Highlights the underrepresentation of women in coaching positions and the factors contributing to these disparities. Similar patterns are observed in Indonesia.

## Gender Disparities in Sports Participation

Gender disparities in sports participation are evident across various levels, including amateur, professional, and elite sports, with significant differences between male and female athletes (Pranoto et al., 2024). The participation rates for women often lag behind those of men, particularly in competitive



settings. For example, a systematic review indicated that boys demonstrate greater participation rates in organized sports than girls, even in contexts designed to encourage inclusivity and equal access (Owen et al., 2022). This disparity is compounded at the elite level, where women are underrepresented in numerous sports disciplines, often relegated to lesser-studied categories or left out entirely, further reinforcing the gender gap and limiting women's visibility in competitive sports. Such imbalances necessitate a deeper examination into the structural and cultural factors influencing participation.

Several sports disciplines showcase stark underrepresentation of women. Traditionally male-dominated fields such as football, wrestling, and motorsports exhibit particularly low female participation rates, while sports like gymnastics and figure skating often skew towards increased female representation. However, it is critical to recognize that even in these contexts, disparities exist regarding funding, support, and media coverage. The effects of societal expectations and cultural norms heavily influence participation, where traditional views of femininity and masculinity dictate the kinds of sports viewed as appropriate for each gender (Roh & Chang, 2022). Such perceptions can deter women from entering competitive arenas, relegating them to recreational or non-competitive roles, which ultimately aggravates the existing discrepancies in sports participation.

Additionally, various factors contribute to ongoing gender gaps in sports participation, including cultural expectations, societal norms, and economic constraints. Cultural attitudes may dictate that women should prioritize familial and domestic responsibilities over athletic pursuits, limiting their opportunities for engagement in sports (Roh & Chang, 2022). Economic barriers also play a significant role; women often have less access to resources and funding related to training, equipment, and travel for competitions, which diminishes their ability to advance in their respective sports (Bfa, 2024). Furthermore, the portrayal of women in sports media frequently lacks the same attention and respect afforded to male athletes, perpetuating a cycle where women's achievements are undervalued and underrepresented, leading to reduced motivation for potential participants (Mirehie, 2022). By addressing these systemic barriers, sports organizations have the opportunity to foster a more equitable environment where women can thrive in competitive arenas, thus significantly improving participation rates in sports across all levels.

To truly understand gender disparities in sports participation, a comprehensive analysis that integrates cultural, economic, and structural insights is necessary. Studies suggest that embracing an inclusive approach, promoting female role models in sports, and implementing policy reforms can help mitigate gender disparities (He et al., 2024). Creating pathways for women to participate in sports without the burden of societal scrutiny will be essential in driving changes at both the grassroots and elite levels. Furthermore, the role of institutions, including schools and local sports federations, must be examined for their impact on participation rates, whether they perpetuate existing norms or actively work towards fostering gender equity in sports (Zeng & He, 2024). A concerted effort towards addressing these underlying issues will help cultivate a sports culture that is genuinely inclusive, thereby enriching the athletic landscape for all genders.

In conclusion, the examination of gender disparities in sports participation reveals a multifaceted issue influenced by cultural norms, economic barriers, and societal expectations. By identifying the specific sports where women are underrepresented and understanding the factors contributing to these gaps, stakeholders can develop targeted initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality in sports participation. The implications of such efforts extend beyond sports themselves, serving as a microcosm for broader societal gender dynamics and the potential for change within entrenched cultural practices. Enhancing participation among women empowers athletes and challenges prevailing narratives that have historically marginalized female involvement in sports, ultimately working toward an equitable framework for future generations of athletes.

### **Barriers to Female Athletes in Indonesian Sports**

In Indonesia, female athletes encounter numerous barriers that contribute to their limited participation and advancement in sports. Socio-cultural barriers are among the most significant impediments, as traditional gender roles dictate expectations surrounding women's behaviors and participation in sports. In a predominantly conservative society, family expectations often emphasize domestic responsibilities over athletic pursuits, leading to reduced opportunities for women to engage in sports (Farzaneh et al., 2021). This cultural backdrop is reinforced by societal norms that often stigmatize





female participation in certain sports, particularly those perceived as aggressive or physically demanding. The interplay between societal perceptions and traditional femininity shapes the narrative around women in sports, resulting in an environment where female athletes may feel constrained in their choices (Roh & Chang, 2022).

Institutional and structural barriers further exacerbate the challenges faced by female athletes in Indonesia. Many sports organizations lack gender-inclusive policies that would promote the participation and development of women in sports (Farzaneh et al., 2021). The distribution of funding is often skewed toward male sports, which leaves women's sports under-resourced and underdeveloped. This gap in funding affects not only access to training and coaching but also the availability of adequate facilities tailored to the needs of female athletes (O'Reilly et al., 2020). The insufficient investment in women's sports at all levels, from grassroots to professional, leads to a cycle of underperformance and limited visibility, which perpetuates the notion that female athletes are not as capable or deserving of recognition as their male counterparts.

Media representation is another critical area where female athletes face significant barriers. Compared to their male counterparts, female athletes are consistently underrepresented in sports media coverage (Sharifzadeh & Brison, 2024). When women are covered, the narratives often emphasize their femininity rather than their athletic abilities, reinforcing gender stereotypes and undermining their professional accomplishments (Mudry, 2021). For instance, female athletes are frequently portrayed alongside male athletes, often in roles that emphasize their looks rather than their skills, which diminishes their status in the sporting world. This skewed representation not only affects the public's perception of female athletes but also hinders their opportunities for sponsorship and media partnerships, further perpetuating gender disparity within the sports industry.

The implications of these barriers are profound. The cultural, institutional, and media landscapes combined create an environment that discourages women from pursuing sports, particularly at competitive levels. As noted in recent research, the lack of visibility and recognition of female athletes can lead to fewer young girls aspiring to participate in sports, which further narrows the pipeline for future female talents. The systemic nature of these barriers indicates a pressing need for comprehensive policy reforms aimed at fostering gender equality in sports, including enhanced funding for women's sports, gender-sensitive training programs, and proactive media campaigns that highlight the achievements of female athletes (Farzaneh et al., 2021).

In summary, the barriers to female athletes in Indonesian sports are deeply rooted in socio-cultural norms, institutional neglect, and inadequate media representation. Addressing these challenges requires an intersectional approach that recognizes the complexity of gender roles while advocating for structural changes within sports organizations and media practices. By acknowledging the multifaceted nature of these barriers, stakeholders, including government bodies and sports organizations, can implement strategies to create a more equitable sporting environment that empowers female athletes and promotes their visibility and success (Roh & Chang, 2022).

The analysis of barriers experienced by female athletes in Indonesia sheds light on the urgent need for a cultural shift to support gender equity in sports. Increased advocacy, improved media representation, and the enforcement of equitable policies are necessary steps toward dismantling these barriers and fostering an inclusive athletic landscape for future generations (Umniah et al., 2021). Through collective efforts, the visibility and support of women in sports can be transformed, inspiring young girls to pursue their athletic passions without the limitations imposed by outdated gender norms.

### **Policy Interventions and Government Initiatives**

In Indonesia, various gender equality policies have been established within the realm of sports governance, reflecting an increasing awareness of the need for equitable representation. The Ministry of Youth and Sports has implemented initiatives aiming to promote gender parity in sports, including policies that emphasize the importance of women's participation at all levels (Charway & Strandbu, 2024). Notably, these policies are aligned with international frameworks such as the Beijing Platform for Action, which calls for the empowerment of women through sports and physical activity. However, while these policies exist, the depth and breadth of their implementation often vary significantly across different regions and sports organizations within the country, leading to inconsistent outcomes that fail to adequately prioritize gender equity in practice (Obande-Ogbuinya et al., 2023).



In terms of practical application, several programs have been launched to enhance female participation in sports, including targeted youth development initiatives and female leadership programs in sports management. For example, youth development programs in schools increasingly provide opportunities for girls to engage in sports from a young age, which is crucial for normalizing female participation (Roberts et al., 2022). Additionally, initiatives such as training workshops aim to prepare women for leadership roles in sports organizations, fostering an environment where female voices are valued in decision-making processes (Farzaneh et al., 2021). Despite these efforts, challenges in sustaining these programs often arise due to limited funding and inadequate support from local sports federations. This lack of commitment can lead to program discontinuation, hindering long-term progress towards gender equality (Gemar & Pope, 2022).

Structural challenges also play a significant role in the effectiveness of gender equality policies. Many sports organizations in Indonesia still operate within patriarchal frameworks that prioritize male athletes and practices. This organizational culture is often resistant to change, even in face of existing policies that promote gender equity (Truşcă & Teodorescu, 2023). Compounding the issue is a general lack of gender-sensitive budgeting, which affects the allocation of resources to women's sports. Consequently, female athletes frequently face insufficient access to training facilities and development opportunities, further entrenching existing disparities (Dadswell et al., 2023). This systemic neglect is detrimental not only to female athletes' development but also to the overall advancement of women's sports in Indonesia.

Moreover, implementation challenges persist regarding the enforcement of existing gender equity policies within sports governance. Without robust mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation, many policies risk becoming merely symbolic (Jeanes et al., 2021). Instances of non-compliance and inadequate accountability measures further complicate the situation, as there is often little recourse for addressing gender discrimination within sports organizations. As a result, the intended effects of policies aimed at promoting gender equality may fall short, failing to create meaningful change for female athletes (Marshall et al., 2023). Recent studies suggest that establishing clear enforcement strategies and performance indicators is crucial for ensuring that gender equality policies translate into tangible results (Ascondo et al., 2023).

In summary, while there are notable policy interventions and government initiatives seeking to foster gender equity in Indonesian sports, significant barriers persist. The ongoing challenges in implementing these policies effectively highlight the need for continuous advocacy, as well as the commitment of various stakeholders including government bodies, sports organizations, and the media. As gender equity continues to evolve in the context of sports, greater collaboration and proactive engagement are necessary to confront the socio-cultural dynamics that inhibit female athletes' participation and representation in Indonesia. Ultimately, these endeavors will contribute not only to the empowerment of women in sports but also represent a broader social shift towards equality and inclusiveness across various sectors within the country.

### **Sociological Explanations of Gender Inequality in Sports**

Sociological explanations of gender inequality in sports can be anchored in various theoretical frameworks, notably Feminist Theory, Structural Functionalism, and Conflict Theory. Each framework provides a unique lens through which to analyze the disparities faced by female athletes. Feminist Theory, for instance, critiques how gender-based power structures influence women's participation and representation in sports. It highlights that women often face systemic discrimination, both overt and covert, rooted in patriarchal values that prioritize male athletes and their achievements over those of female athletes (Tighe et al., 2023). This theory elucidates the barriers women encounter, such as the trivialization of their experiences and the societal stereotype that regards athleticism as a predominantly male trait, thus hampering their motivations and opportunities in competitive sports (Tashiro et al., 2022).

From the perspective of Structural Functionalism, the analysis focuses on how societal structures shape gender roles within sports, reinforcing traditional divisions between men and women. This theory posits that social institutions, including family, education, and sports organizations, work together to uphold specific gender roles that delineate acceptable behavior for men and women. For example, women are frequently socialized to prioritize family obligations over athletic pursuits, which correlates

with lower participation rates in competitive sports (Höök et al., 2021). Additionally, structural functionalism explains the segregation in sports disciplines, where activities considered "feminine" are valorized at the expense of those deemed "masculine," thus restricting women's access to a broader spectrum of sporting experiences (Sheppard-Marks et al., 2020). This structural framework emphasizes the need for societal changes to challenge entrenched norms that dictate gendered behaviors, influencing women's representation in sports.

Conflict Theory offers a different angle by examining how power dynamics and access to resources contribute to the systematic marginalization of women in sports. This perspective asserts that a historical predominance of male dominance within athletic contexts reproduces inequalities by controlling critical resources—financial and organizational—that are necessary for success (Alviana et al., 2023). Specifically, women often encounter disparities in funding for their training programs, promotional support, and access to coaching, which are typically allocated preferentially to male athletes (Karafil & Ulaş, 2023). The implications of these resource dynamics underline the competitive nature of sports, where women are left at a disadvantage. Conflict Theory thus suggests that to rectify the imbalance, there needs to be a redistribution of resources and heightened advocacy for female representation across all levels of sport.

In examining the intersection of these theories, it is apparent that they collectively illustrate the complexity of gender inequality in sports. Feminist Theory foregrounds the need to address the patriarchal structures that devalue women's sports, while Structural Functionalism sheds light on the societal norms that sustain these disparities (von Rosen et al., 2022). Meanwhile, Conflict Theory urges a critical reevaluation of how resources are allocated and administered within sports organizations, seeking to dismantle the systemic barriers that limit female participation (Morgan et al., 2020). These combined insights reveal that merely implementing new policies without addressing the cultural and social underpinnings of gender inequality is insufficient for enacting lasting change.

As the discussion around gender equality in sports evolves, it is crucial for policymakers, sports organizations, and advocates to engage with these sociological frameworks. By doing so, they can better understand the various dimensions of oppression faced by female athletes and work toward creating a more inclusive and equitable environment in sport. Moving forward, an integrated approach that encompasses feminist perspectives, an understanding of societal structures, and the dynamics of power can facilitate practical strategies aimed at not only elevating the status of women in sports but also transforming the broader cultural landscape that perpetuates gender inequality.

### **Comparative Analysis with Global Gender Inclusion Efforts**

Global gender inclusion efforts in sports present valuable case studies for enhancing gender equity in Indonesia. Successful strategies from various countries often highlight the importance of comprehensive policies and frameworks that promote women's participation in sports. For instance, initiatives coordinated by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and UNESCO emphasize the significance of gender parity and inclusivity within sports governance, providing concrete recommendations for nations to adopt and adapt (Farzaneh et al., 2021). These organizations promote equality through various means, including funding for women's programs, implementation of gender quotas within sports management, and support for events specifically designed to elevate women's visibility in sports (Holmes et al., 2024). By examining these models, Indonesia can identify actionable strategies to foster greater participation of women in sports, ensuring that their contributions are recognized and valued.

Furthermore, lessons learned from countries that have successfully implemented youth development programs and female leadership initiatives reveal the potential for significant progress in Indonesian sports governance. For instance, countries like Canada have made strides by integrating leadership training for women within their youth sports programs, enabling younger generations to take on roles in sports management and coaching (Grabe, 2023). This not only empowers young women but also cultivates an environment where gender equality is ingrained in the sporting culture from the ground up. Indonesia can benefit from adapting similar grassroots initiatives, focusing on cultivating female leaders in sports and providing mentorship opportunities that enhance women's involvement in sports management and decision-making (Thorpe et al., 2023). By prioritizing the development of female role

models within its sports infrastructure, Indonesia can foster a more inclusive environment for aspiring female athletes.

Another essential factor is the role of international sports organizations in advocating for gender equality. Organizations such as the IOC and UNESCO are critical in spearheading global initiatives that challenge existing norms and promote a climate of inclusivity across sports (McGannon et al., 2025). These bodies not only provide resources and frameworks for member nations but also serve as platforms for sharing best practices and encouraging collaboration among nations. In the Indonesian context, aligning national policies with international standards can enhance the credibility and effectiveness of local initiatives focusing on gender equity. This alignment allows for a synergistic approach to address barriers facing female athletes while also holding governing bodies accountable for implementing gender-inclusive policies.

Despite the potential advantages, the challenges in adopting these global strategies cannot be overlooked. The successful implementation of gender equity initiatives often hinges on robust support systems, including adequate funding, political will, and a commitment to tracking progress through measurable outcomes. In Indonesia, insufficient resources and lack of enforcement of existing policies can impede efforts to create a level playing field for female athletes. Therefore, it is crucial for leaders within Indonesian sports to engage actively with international organizations to secure necessary support while also fostering domestic partnerships that advocate for sustained systemic change (Parvathy, 2020). Building a coalition of stakeholders committed to gender equality in sports is vital for promoting inclusivity and ensuring meaningful advances in female athletic participation.

In conclusion, global gender inclusion efforts in sports offer a wealth of insights and strategies that can be adopted to promote gender equity in Indonesia. By implementing successful policies from organizations like the IOC and following the examples of countries that prioritize women's participation, Indonesia can create a more inclusive sporting environment. Simultaneously, the collaborative efforts of international sports organizations can help to support and guide these changes, ensuring that female athletes have equal opportunities to thrive and contribute to Indonesia's rich sporting culture. As attention to gender equity in sports continues to grow, Indonesia has a unique opportunity to position itself as a leader in this important area, benefiting not only its athletes but society as a whole.

## Discussion

The examination of gender inequality in Indonesian sports reveals a complex interplay of socio-cultural, institutional, and structural barriers impeding women's participation. It is clear that traditional gender roles deeply influence perceptions of femininity and athleticism, thus limiting women's access to sports. These roles are reinforced at family and societal levels, where cultural expectations often prioritize domestic responsibilities over athletic endeavors for women. This patriarchal framework results in a persistent cycle of underrepresentation in sports that resonates through various levels of competition, from amateur to elite sports. Despite existing policies advocating for gender equity, they often lack adequate enforcement and support, which further exacerbates the challenges women face in pursuing athletic careers (Farzaneh et al., 2021; Roh & Chang, 2022).

Institutional and structural barriers compound the socio-cultural challenges by demonstrating a lack of gender-inclusive policies within sports organizations. The funding disparities between male and female sports manifest in inadequate training facilities and, consequently, fewer development opportunities for female athletes. The maintenance of traditional divisions and the dominance of male practices within sports governance contribute to this resource allocation gap, leading to an environment where women are often marginalized and relegated to supportive roles instead of showcasing their athletic abilities (Charway & Strandbu, 2024; Gemar & Pope, 2022; Marshall et al., 2023; Umniyah et al., 2021). This systematic neglect underscores the urgent need for policy reform and a shift in organizational culture to promote equitable treatment and recognition of female athletes.

Media representation is another critical factor influencing gender inequality in sports, where female athletes are significantly underrepresented in coverage compared to their male counterparts. When they are featured, the focus tends to emphasize their looks or relationships rather than their athletic achievements. This gender stereotyping not only limits the visibility of women's sports but also



reinforces societal perceptions that question the legitimacy of women's participation in competitive sports (Mudry, 2021). To achieve meaningful change, it is crucial for media outlets to adopt more equitable practices that celebrate female athletes for their skills, achievements, and contributions to their respective sports, thereby encouraging broader societal support for women in athletics.

Addressing these barriers requires an integrated approach drawing lessons from successful gender inclusion strategies employed in other countries. For instance, initiatives led by international organizations such as the International Olympic Committee and UNESCO have effectively emphasized the importance of gender parity through comprehensive policies and funding mechanisms (Farzaneh et al., 2021; Holmes et al., 2024). Implementing similar frameworks in Indonesia could help foster a more inclusive environment, bolstering female participation at all levels. Grassroots programs aimed at empowering young female athletes and cultivating female leadership in sports management are vital in this regard, as they can establish a critical foundation for long-term change (Grabe, 2023; Thorpe et al., 2023).

Ultimately, the role of international sports organizations cannot be understated in advocating for gender equality. By providing resources, frameworks, and platforms for sharing best practices, these organizations are instrumental in facilitating the work toward equality in sports at a global scale. Such international collaboration can offer valuable insights and support to Indonesian sports governance in re-evaluating its current strategies and policies, ensuring that they genuinely advance gender equity (McGannon et al., 2025).

In conclusion, creating an equitable landscape for female athletes in Indonesia requires concerted efforts from all stakeholders, including government bodies, sports organizations, the media, and society at large. By leveraging the insights gleaned from sociological perspectives and international success stories, Indonesia has the opportunity to transform its sports culture in favor of inclusivity and equity. It is essential to recognize that promoting gender equality in sports extends beyond mere representation; it is a critical step toward achieving broader social justice and empowering future generations of female athletes.

## Conclusions

The exploration of gender inequality in Indonesian sports has revealed that deeply entrenched socio-cultural barriers, institutional neglect, and inadequate media representation significantly limited women's participation and visibility. The analysis highlighted how traditional gender roles and societal expectations constrained female athletes, reinforcing perceptions that prioritized male dominance in sports. The work underscored the need for systemic change, advocating for the implementation of gender-inclusive policies and a reallocation of resources to ensure equitable treatment for female athletes. This comprehensive examination provided an understanding of the challenges that female athletes face, thus fulfilling the objective of identifying barriers to gender equity in sports. This study advanced the discourse on gender inequality in sports by highlighting the multifaceted barriers encountered by female athletes in Indonesia and offering informed recommendations for promoting inclusivity. The work emphasized that addressing gender disparities is not merely a matter of increasing female presence in sports but entails a comprehensive rethinking of the structures, narratives, and policies that govern the sporting ecosystem. The findings and recommendations can serve as a catalyst for stakeholders to implement necessary changes aimed at fostering a more equitable environment for all athletes in Indonesia, ultimately contributing to the broader goals of social justice and gender equality in sports.

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