



## The Role of Sport in Shaping Gender Identity of FIK Unimed Students

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** Promoting gender equality by understanding gender constructs is crucial to eradicating gender discrimination and creating a more equitable society. A person's masculinity and femininity can be influenced by what they see in their daily lives, including through sporting activities. **Methods:** This study used quantitative methods with the main instruments being questionnaires and documentation. Questionnaires were used to collect data on students' perceptions, attitudes, and level of knowledge about the role of sports in shaping gender identity. Respondents in this study were 30 FIK Unimed students who were purposively selected. **Results:** The data obtained from the questionnaire will be analyzed to identify the pattern of students' perceptions of the role of sports in shaping their masculinity and femininity. The results of this study are expected to provide new insights into the influence of sports in the construction of gender identity among students. **Discussion:** The results of this study will be analyzed to understand how sport, as an activity that is often associated with a particular gender, affects the gender identity formation of FIK Unimed students. The discussion will also address the social implications of the research findings to promote gender equality in sport and education.

**Keywords:** Gender equality, Student perception, Masculinity, Physical activity

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## A. Introduction

According to Giriwijoyo (2005: 30), exercise is a series of regular and planned body movements that a person does consciously to improve their functional abilities. Meanwhile, according to Gumira Ajidarma (in Ibeng, 2021), sport is an activity or activity that nourishes the human body and a means of competition to find one's talent in the field of sports.

Erikson (in Papalia, 2008: 587) defines identity as a conception of self, determination of goals, values, and beliefs held firmly by a person. Richard Jenkins (1996) argues that identity is our understanding of who we are and who others are, and how they relate to each other in social interactions. Identity is something that can be negotiated and shaped through the process of human interaction.

Giddens (2004) explains that individual identity is defined by recognition from other individuals, as well as the qualities or attributes given by others to the individual. Meanwhile, Ann Oakley (1972) defines gender as a socialization process that teaches men and women to behave in accordance with gender roles expected by society. R.W. Connell (1987) put forward the concept of "hegemony of masculinity" and "hegemony of femininity", which sees gender as a dynamic and ever-changing power relationship. Judith Butler (1990)

argues that gender is performative, which means that gender is shaped through the actions and behaviors that individuals perform in everyday life.

Sport plays an important role in shaping students' gender identity, especially within Unimed's Faculty of Sport Sciences (FIK), where physical activity is an integral part of the curriculum and daily activities. Sport, which is often associated with attributes of masculinity, provides opportunities for individuals to express themselves through physical skills and success in competition. For male university students, sport can reinforce an image of masculinity that is driven by social norms that regard sport as a male-dominant domain. Conversely, for female students, sport can be a means of breaking down gender stereotypes that limit their roles, while forming a stronger and more confident identity of femininity in the context of physical competition. Sports activities at FIK Unimed also provide a space for students to experience social learning about gender roles that are in accordance with societal expectations, such as strength, leadership, and courage for men, and gentleness, cooperation, and perseverance for women. Through social interactions in sporting activities, students can experience the negotiation between the gender roles set by society and how they articulate their own identities. Thus, sport

serves as an important means in shaping and reflecting the gender identity of FIK Unimed students, where they learn to negotiate their roles in the wider society.

Several studies have revealed the importance of sport in shaping gender identity, both at the individual and social levels. According to research by Koivula (2001), sport has a significant influence in shaping gender perceptions among adolescents, with men tending to be more involved in sports that are perceived as masculine, while women are often restricted to sports that are perceived as more feminine. This research suggests that sport serves as an arena where dominant gender roles can be learned and reinforced, but also has the potential to break down gender stereotypes through involvement in sports that do not conform to traditional roles.

A study conducted by Messner (2002) found that the media and social environment surrounding sport play a major role in constructing ideologies of masculinity and femininity, where men are more often portrayed as strong and dominant athletes, while women are more often involved in sports that emphasize beauty or gentleness. Messner argues that sport is a social form that reinforces or even shapes gender differences.

Another study by Green (2009) focused on women's experiences in sports that are considered masculine and how they struggle to be accepted in these environments. This research showed that although women were involved in competitive physical sports, they often faced challenges in negotiating their gender roles, and some felt that their physical abilities were tested more harshly than those of men.

Research by Schmalz and Kerstetter (2006) also found that the gender identity of students involved in sport at the collegiate level is shaped through their experiences in competing and interacting with same-sex and opposite-sex peers. The results of this study suggest that although there are differences in perceptions of gender roles among university students, involvement in sport can enrich their understanding of what masculinity and femininity mean in a broader social context.

Overall, research has shown that sport is not only a physical activity but also acts as a social construct that influences gender identity formation. In the case of university students, sport can maintain traditional gender roles or even aid the change and negotiation of gender roles in the wider society. This study is based on our understanding that sport as a social and

physical activity can influence students' gender identity in various environments, including in academic environments such as FIK Unimed.

## **B. Methods**

This research uses quantitative methods with a survey approach, which combines two main instruments, namely questionnaires and documentation. The population in this study were students of FIK Unimed, with a sample of 30 respondents selected purposively. Questionnaires were used as the main instrument to collect quantitative data regarding the perceptions, attitudes, and level of knowledge of respondents regarding the role of sports in shaping the gender identity of students of the Faculty of Sports Science (FIK) Unimed. The questionnaire was structured with questions designed to obtain measurable and systematic data.

In addition, the documentation method is used to complement the data obtained

from the questionnaire. This documentation collection aims to obtain supporting evidence in the form of additional information relevant to the research topic. The combination of these two methods allows researchers to obtain more comprehensive and valid data, both in the form of measurable quantitative data and qualitative evidence that supports research findings.

## **C. Result and Discussion**

### **Result**

The results of the research conducted can be obtained by measuring perceptions of masculinity and femininity in the context of sports, where there are 30 students of Medan State University who filled out the questionnaire. The data collection of this research was carried out on December 05, 2024 the results of the research data were obtained by distributing questionnaires. In measuring perceptions of masculinity and femininity in the context of sports can be seen in the following diagram:

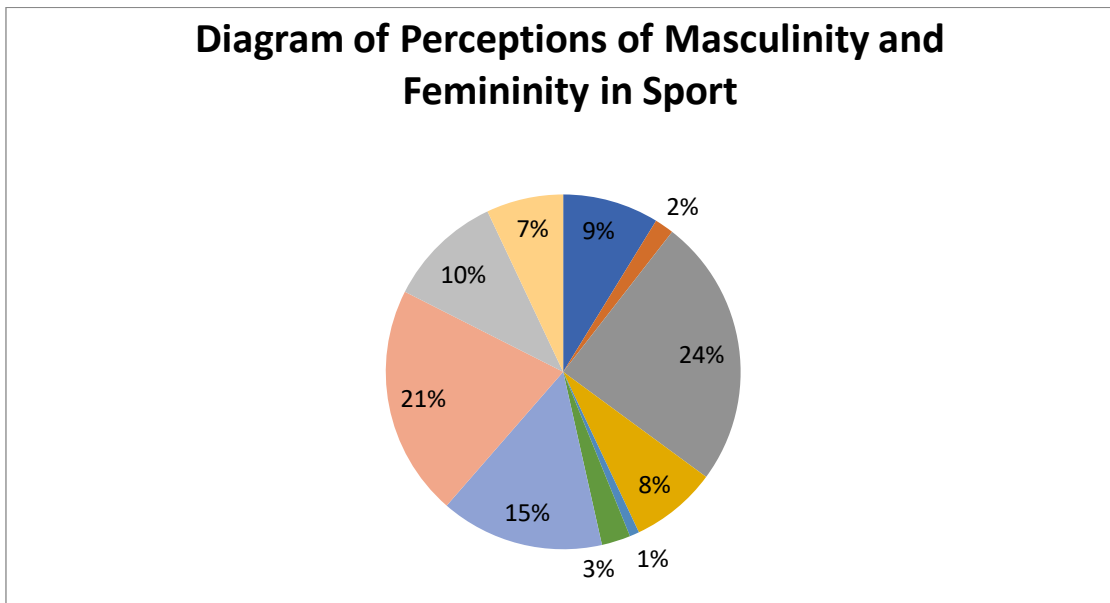


Figure 1. Diagram of Perceptions of Masculinity and Femininity in Sport

The results presented in the diagram show that students' perceptions of masculinity and femininity in sports are still influenced by gender stereotypes. A total of 24% of respondents thought that certain sports, such as soccer, are more suitable for men, while only 8% thought that certain sports, such as gymnastics, are more suitable for women. This shows the existence of traditional views that link sports to gender roles. Perceptions of men who play sports as more masculine (9%) and women who play sports as less feminine (2%) were relatively low, suggesting that these views are shifting. However, expectations of athlete traits based on gender still exist, albeit in small percentages. A total of 1% of respondents expected male athletes to exhibit aggressive and competitive traits, while 3% stated that female athletes should be graceful and

gentle. This indicates that traditional gender roles in sport still have a place, albeit not a dominant one.

Sport is perceived to have different benefits for men and women. A total of 15% of respondents stated that sports can help men develop leadership traits, while 21% believe that sports help women increase self-confidence. This shows that sport is still seen as a means of developing different traits based on gender. Students' expectations of the physical appearance of male and female athletes also differ, as expressed by 10% of respondents. However, on the other hand, sport is also seen as helping to reduce gender stereotypes (7%).

### Discussion

The results of this study show that although there is great potential to use sport

as a tool to promote gender equality, its impact is still limited, especially in terms of students' perceptions of masculinity and femininity in the context of sport. Most students' views are still dominated by gender stereotypes that associate certain sports with certain genders. For example, sports such as soccer and basketball are often perceived as masculine activities, while sports such as gymnastics and volleyball are more often associated with femininity. This is in line with Koivula's (2001) findings, which show that physical activities that are perceived as masculine are more often preferred by men, while women are more involved in sports that are perceived as more feminine.

However, although gender stereotypes are still strong, some traditional views are beginning to shift. Research by Messner (2002) shows that sport has the potential to break down gender stereotypes, especially when women are involved in sports that have been considered masculine. In this context, our results are in line with these findings, indicating that although expectations of male and female athletes still differ, participation in more inclusive sports can begin to reduce these differences. Research by Green (2009) also supports this, suggesting that women involved in competitive sport can develop stronger

identities and challenge traditional gender roles.

Nevertheless, while sport has the potential to be an effective tool in reducing gender stereotypes, there are still barriers that need to be overcome. Therefore, further efforts need to be made to promote sport as an inclusive tool that supports gender equality. This also includes changes at the educational and media policy levels to create a more equitable image of sport that is free from gender discrimination.

This research adds to the understanding of how FIK Unimed students perceive gender identity in sport, and how sport can play a role in reducing gender stereotypes. One of the important contributions of this research is the identification of students' views on how sport can shape or strengthen their gender identity, as well as how they see gender roles in certain sports. This research provides new insights into the potential of sport as a tool for gender equality among university students in Indonesia, particularly in academic settings such as FIK Unimed.

Although this study provides valuable insights, there are some limitations that need to be noted. First, the sample used only consisted of 30 students, which may not be representative of the entire student population at FIK Unimed. Secondly, this study only relies on quantitative methods

through questionnaires, which may not fully explore the depth of individual views and experiences related to gender identity in sports. Further research involving larger samples and qualitative approaches, such as in-depth interviews, will provide a more comprehensive picture of this topic.

#### **D. Conclusion**

Based on the results of the questionnaire, it can be concluded that perceptions of masculinity and femininity in sports are still influenced by gender stereotypes that are quite dominant among respondents. A small proportion of respondents (9%) thought that men who play sports are considered more masculine, while 2% felt that women who play sports are considered less feminine. In addition, 24% of respondents thought that certain sports, such as soccer, were more suitable for men, while another 8% believed that sports such as gymnastics were more suitable for women. However, there were also more progressive views: 15% of respondents think that sports can help men develop leadership traits, while 21% think that sports can boost women's confidence. However, traditional views are still strong, with 1% of respondents believing that male athletes should exhibit aggressive and competitive traits, and 3% feeling that

female athletes should be more graceful and gentle. In addition, 10% of respondents stated that society has different expectations of the physical appearance of male and female athletes, but another 7% believe that sports can help eliminate gender stereotypes. Overall, while there are still traditional views that associate sports with certain gender roles, the results of this study show that sports have a significant role in shaping gender perceptions. To foster more inclusive gender equality, more in-depth education and programs that dispel gender stereotypes are needed, as well as promoting sport as an equal development tool for all genders.

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#### **F. Conflict of Interest**

This research is declared to have no conflict of interest.

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