

Public Perception of Women's Participation in Tarung Derajat Martial Arts in Semarang City

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Abstract

The low participation of women in Tarung Derajat sport is influenced by gender stereotypes that associate martial arts with masculinity, thus affecting public perception and acceptance. This study aims to describe the public perception of Tarung Derajat, women's participation, and the role of social factors and media. The method used is descriptive quantitative with a cross-sectional survey through a Likert scale questionnaire to 385 respondents from Semarang City. The results of the study show that the perception of Tarung Derajat falls into the good category, while the perception of women's participation tends to be positive but lower. Social and media factors play a role in shaping public perception. Therefore, more inclusive efforts are needed to increase women's participation.

Keywords: martial arts; public perception; tarung derajat; women's

1. Introduction

Tarung Derajat is a traditional Indonesian martial art founded by Achmad Drajat (AA Boxer) in Bandung, West Java (Azhari et al., 2018), which has evolved into a sport emphasizing discipline, responsibility, and etiquette (Hanifah & Setiawan, 2015). It integrates physical strength, intelligence, and moral values through five key abilities: strength, speed, accuracy, courage, and perseverance (Setiawan, 2021). Expressed in fundamental movements such as punches, kicks, blocks, and throws (Noviatmoko, 2016). The sport includes various technical components, including stance, guard, punching, and kicking techniques, which are based on training and practice (Hasibuan et al., 2019). Beyond physical and technical aspects, Tarung Derajat also emphasizes mental readiness, sportsmanship, self-control, and resilience, reflecting the cultural and philosophical values of Indonesian martial arts while contributing to character building and ethical development (Chairad, 2017).

Tarung Derajat is developed not only to achieve physical performance but also to build strong character and cultural values, integrating physical, mental, and social aspects in a balanced manner (Elda & Setiawan, 2025). However, despite its development and achievements, women's participation in this sport remains limited due to persistent gender gaps influenced by patriarchal cultural constructs that associate martial arts with masculinity (Fadhila Zaen, 2021). Previous studies indicate that women in martial arts are often perceived as incompatible with feminine norms and may receive negative labels despite demonstrating strong achievements (Bahor Muhaji, 2020). Furthermore, social stereotypes linking contact sports with masculinity continue to create barriers, as women's involvement is often viewed as contradicting traditional gender roles (Br. Pinem & Rosramadhana, 2023). This is supported by findings that awareness of traditional gender roles

reinforce biases and stereotypes that limit women's participation in sports perceived as masculine, thereby strengthening social restrictions in physical contact sports (Yushan He et al., 2024).

The strong patriarchal culture that is still strong in Indonesia tends to place women in the domestic sphere, while heavy physical activities and contact sports are perceived as a male domain (Rawe, 2025). This condition limits women's participation and shapes the assumption that women have less physical capability (Yovita et al., 2022). In fact, martial arts such as Tarung Derajat have the potential to serve as an empowering tool that can boost women's self-confidence and independence. In line with this, Li Yike et al (2024) found that women's involvement in contact sports has positive social and psychological impacts, although initially they still face various prejudices and social stigmas.

This phenomenon shows that social environments such as family, school, and community have a significant influence on women's decisions to participate in contact sports like martial arts. In this context, martial arts are still often perceived as a masculine domain that demands physical strength and courage, thereby limiting women's involvement (Liu et al., 2023). In addition, societal norms and gender roles also affect the acceptance of women in contact sports, where women tend to face greater social barriers compared to men (Lindsay et al., 2023). Based on the author's personal experience as a woman who grew up in Semarang, social pressure and rejection from family serve as a real depiction that the narrative limiting women's participation in contact sports is still persistent and can affect women's involvement in them.

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Tarung Derajat essentially instills moral values, such as discipline, responsibility, and solidarity, which are relevant in daily life. Alya Namira (2023) A study on the Attitudes of Parents of Female Muay Thai Martial Arts Practitioners in Medan toward the Chains of Patriarchal Culture, found concerns related to changes in character and feminine image. Most parents eventually provided support, seeing its benefits for self-protection and the development of positive character. Ramadhan & Utami (2021) Research shows that women's involvement in martial arts can drive social transformation and moral strengthening. These findings align with the author's experience in Semarang, where the values instilled through martial arts actually become a means to confront and challenge the cultural pressures of patriarchy that limit women's participation.

Media representations and social norms that associate sports with masculinity also shape perceptions of women athletes, especially in sports considered masculine, such as martial arts. Women athletes in contact sports are often viewed differently and judged as less fitting with a feminine image (Liu et al., 2023). More broadly, gender stereotypes remain a major barrier limiting women's participation through restricted access, lack of support, and insufficient recognition. This situation reflects the strong influence of social norms in determining the extent to which women's roles can be accepted in the world of sports (Raymond Pardamean Tamba et al., 2024).

Empirical studies that specifically examine public perceptions of Tarung Derajat, particularly regarding women's participation, are still relatively limited because most research focuses more on technical aspects, achievements, and athlete development. In fact, social perceptions play an important role in shaping the level of acceptance, support, and opportunities for women's involvement. These perceptions reflect obstacles in the form of gender stereotypes and cultural norms, but they also have the potential to act as driving factors if supported by a positive social environment and media representation. Therefore, this descriptive quantitative research is necessary to systematically map public perception trends as a basis for developing Tarung Derajat in a more inclusive and gender equity-responsive manner.

Previous research by Fadhila Zaen (2021) found that female Taekwondo UKM athletes at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta still face patriarchal stereotypes that view martial arts as a masculine domain, although they respond to this by focusing on achievements and interpreting gender equality in accordance with religious values. Unlike that study, which was qualitative and limited to the perspective of athletes, this research presents novelty through a descriptive quantitative approach by measuring the public's perceptions in Semarang City towards Tarung Derajat, particularly regarding female participation as well as the influence of social factors and media. This study maps broader trends in public perception to identify how social constructions can be both obstacles and support for women's involvement, thereby providing empirical data as a basis for developing more inclusive sports policies in Semarang City.

2. Method

This study uses a quantitative approach with descriptive methods and a cross-sectional survey design, as it is considered most suitable for describing public perceptions of Tarung Derajat, perceptions of women's participation, and the role of social factors and media in shaping such acceptance. The quantitative approach was chosen because public perceptions can be operationalized into measurable indicators expressed in numerical scores using a Likert scale, while the descriptive method is used to describe conditions developing in society without testing cause-and-effect relationships.

The cross-sectional design allows for data collection at a specific point in time without manipulating variables, thus being able to represent the actual condition of public perceptions. Data collection was conducted using an instrument in the form of a closed questionnaire developed based on the research variable indicators, including perceptions of Tarung Derajat, women's participation, as well as the influence of social factors and media. The instruments use a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), which aims to measure the respondents' level of agreement consistently and systematically. s of processing and analyzing data accurately and in a structured manner.

The sampling technique in this study used purposive sampling, with the criteria of respondents being residents of Semarang City, aged 17-55 years. The sample size was determined using the Lemeshow formula with a confidence level of 95% ($\alpha = 0.05$), resulting in a minimum of 384 respondents, which was rounded up to 385 respondents to increase the accuracy of the estimation.

Data analysis was carried out using descriptive statistical techniques, namely by calculating the mean, percentage, and frequency distribution for each indicator and research variable. Furthermore, the mean values were categorized based on the Likert scale intervals to determine

the respondents' perception level into the categories of very poor, poor, fair, good, and very good. This analysis process aims to provide a systematic, objective, and easily interpretable depiction of the community's perception of women's participation in Tarung Derajat sports.

3. Result

This study uses a quantitative approach to describe public perception of Tarung Derajat, perception of women's participation in Tarung Derajat, as well as the role of social factors and media. Data were then collected through online questionnaires from 385 respondents distributed via social media, with each variable measured using a five-point Likert scale.

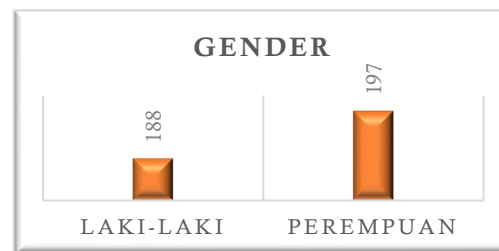


Figure 1. Gender characteristics

This study involved 385 respondents, consisting of 188 men and 197 women, indicating that female respondents were more dominant compared to males.

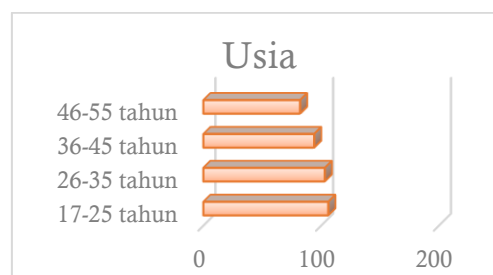


Figure 2. Age characteristics

The number of respondents in this study was 385. There were four age categories, with those aged 17-25 being the largest group of respondents at 106 people, followed by respondents aged 25-35 years at 103 people, 36-45 years at 94 people, and respondents aged 46-55 years at 82 people.

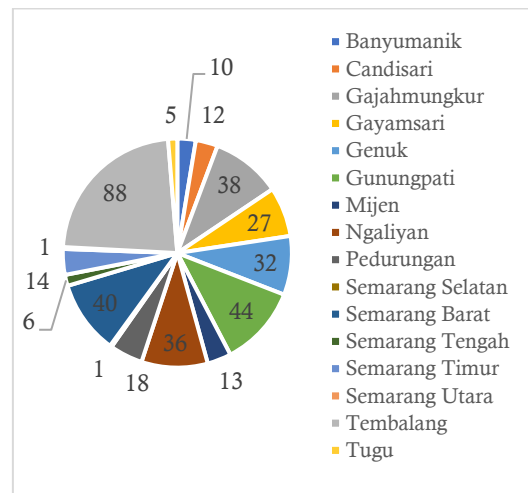


Figure 3. Residency characteristics

Based on Figure 3. this study involved 385 respondents from the city of Semarang, with the largest number coming from Tembalang District. The diversity of respondents' area reflects variations in public perception.

Descriptive analysis is used to describe the characteristics of respondents and the tendency of answers to each statement. All variables are analyzed using averages to determine the level of public perception of Tarung Derajat, women's participation, as well as social and media factors. Data distribution is determined through score intervals used to categorize the result into specific categories (very low-very high), so that data interpretation can be carried out systematically and objectively.

Table 1. Descriptive statistic of variables

Variable	Range statistic	Min	Max	Mean	Std. deviation
P1	20	5	25	18.15	5.372
P2	15	10	25	17.52	5.053
P3	20	15	25	18.68	5.651

The public perception variable of Tarung Derajat (P1) has a minimum value of 5, a maximum of 25, and a range of 20. Measured through 5 Likert scale items, this variable produces an average score of 19.15 with a standard deviation of 5.372, indicating a relatively even distribution of responses. The average per item of 3.63 falls into the good category, so it can be concluded that the public generally has a positive perception of the sport of Tarung Derajat.

The variable of public perception regarding women's participation in Tarung Derajat (P2) has a minimum value of 10, a maximum of 25, and a range of 15. Measured through 5 items on a Likert scale, the average score obtained was 17.52 with a standard deviation of 3.053, indicating that respondents' answers were relatively homogeneous. The average per item of 3.50 falls into the good category, so it can be concluded that the public has begun to offer a positive assessment of women's participation in Tarung Derajat, although differences in opinion still exist.

The social and media factor variables (P3) have a minimum value of 5, a maximum of 25, and a range of 20. Measured through 5 Likert scale items, the average values obtained are 18.68 with a

standard deviation of 5.651, indicating a relatively even data distribution. The average per item of 3.74 falls into the good category, so it can be concluded that social and media factors play a fairly strong role in shaping public perception of women's participation in Tarung Derajat sports.

The research results show that public perception of Tarung Derajat falls into the good category, where respondents have begun to see this sport not only as a physical activity but also as a means of developing mental strength, discipline, sportmanship, self-control, and self-confidence. However, some members of the community still associate it with violence and masculinity due to old stereotypes surrounding martial arts.

4. Discussion

These findings align with Berger & Luckmann (1996), who state that perceptions are formed through social interaction and learning from the environment. The lack of positive information further reinforces this view, as emphasized by Ipang Setiawan & Ricka Ulfatul Faza (2019) The development of sports is influenced by socio-cultural dimensions. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct socialization and provide educational media to strengthen the positive image of Tarung Derajat in the community.

The result of the analysis in this study indicates that public perception of the sport Tarung Derajat falls into the good category, as shown by the average respondents ranging from 3.41 to 4.20 based on the Likert scale. This indicates that the public gives positive evaluations of the aspects contained in Tarung Derajat, such as sportmanship, discipline, and character building. However, the perception of women's participation in Tarung Derajat has a lower average score, although still within the fairly good to good category. The difference shows that public acceptance of women in this sport is not yet fully equal, influenced by the view that Tarung Derajat is more suitable for men due to the demands of physical strength and courage. Thus, although there is a positive tendency, gender-based social constructions still remain a factor that influences public perception of women's participation in Tarung Derajat

These views reflect a strong social gender construct, where women are still associated with gentler activities, making their involvement in martial arts considered unusual. Barriers to women's participation arise not only from individual factors but also from norms and values. Theoretically, perceptions are shaped through the continuous socialization of social values, and the construction of reality through interaction (Walgito, 2010). Therefore, strengthening public acceptance of women's participation in Tarung Derajat sports needs to be supported through public education development, reinforcement of gender equality values, as well as increased exposure and recognition of women athletes' achievements. These efforts play an important role in shaping a more open and responsive social construct toward women's involvement in Tarung Derajat sports.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

The research results indicate that the public perception of the people of Semarang City towards Tarung Derajat sports is generally in the fairly good category. The majority of respondents understand the values of sportmanship, discipline, and character building contained in this martial art. However, perceptions regarding women's participation are still relatively lower, reflecting the persistent influence of gender stereotypes and traditional cultural views that position Tarung Derajat as a masculine domain, although a more open attitude is beginning to emerge. Social factors, such as family support, peer environment, and societal norms, as well as the role of the

media, have been shown to significantly influence the acceptance of women's involvement through more positive representations.

This research is expected to serve as a basis for organizations and relevant stakeholders to enhance outreach involving women athletes in order to build positive public perception. It is also expected to continue improving education related to women's participation in Tarung Derajat through various media to reduce gender stigma. For future research, expanding the scope of factors affecting perceptions of women's participation is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding.

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