

The Impact of the MilkLife Soccer Challenge Event on the Development of Early Age Women's Soccer in Semarang City

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Received: 12 March 2026 Accepted: 18 April 2026 Published: 14 May 2026



Abstract

This study was based on the limited number of youth women's soccer competitions in Indonesia, which has resulted in suboptimal athlete training and development. These limitations make competitive events an urgent necessity for enhancing competitive experience, motivation, and early talent identification. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the impact of the MilkLife Soccer Challenge event on the development of young female soccer athletes in Semarang City. The study employed a descriptive qualitative method with 15 athletes, 3 coaches, and 1 PSSI Semarang City official selected through purposive sampling. Data collection techniques included interviews, observations, and documentation, with data analysis using the Miles and Huberman model. The results indicate that this event has a positive impact, marked by increased motivation and interest in training, greater competitive experience that supports the improvement of technical skills, and the identification of athletic talent. Additionally, there has been an increase in female student participation in soccer. These findings indicate that competitions play a strategic role in strengthening the ecosystem for the sustainable development of women's soccer.

Keywords: women's soccer; sports competition; athlete development; milklife soccer challenge

1. Introduction

Women's soccer is a phenomenon that has begun to develop in Indonesia and has gained attention in recent years. Although the history of soccer in Indonesia has undeniably been dominated by men, the development of soccer in Indonesia has shown a positive trend, starting with the development of soccer, which has begun to show significant results (Yunisal, 2025). The development of women's soccer cannot be separated from the coaching system from an early age as the basis for sustainable development. The core of this development is to create equal opportunities for women in sports, especially soccer, to improve quality and interest, and to build a strong athlete ecosystem (Munandar, 2024). As the most popular sport in the world, soccer offers numerous benefits, including the development of social skills, increased self-confidence, and the formation of healthy lifestyles. Research shows that participating in sports can help women overcome various social and cultural challenges that often limit them. (Maneiro, Casal, Ardá, & Losada, 2024).

Semarang City, as the capital of Central Java province, has enormous potential in the field of sports, one of which is women's soccer. However, the number of female soccer players is still far fewer than male soccer players. Women's soccer events such as tournaments and tiered competitions serve as key drivers for participation, talent development, and the creation of a strong women's soccer ecosystem, particularly at the most foundational level early childhood (Putra & Yahyai,

2023). The MilkLife Soccer Challenge is an example of an event that can contribute to building an early childhood women's soccer ecosystem and promoting women's soccer in the city of Semarang. The MilkLife Soccer Challenge is a soccer tournament aimed at young female athletes in the city of Semarang. This event has become one of the main platforms promoting the development of women's soccer in Semarang, with the goal of increasing participation, skills, and courage among female athletes in the early age groups of KU 10 and KU 12. The tournament is participated in by elementary schools that have soccer programs for girls. This activity not only serves as a competition, but also as a means of education and outreach regarding the importance of sports for girls. With a tagline that emphasizes the spirit of togetherness and fair play, MilkLife Soccer Challenge strives to provide a positive experience for participants, both in terms of competition and social interaction (Djarum Foundation, 2024).

Sports events are one of the spearheads in athlete development. In the context of women's soccer, especially at an early age, the MilkLife Soccer Challenge event provides a platform for young athletes to showcase and develop their abilities in competition and gain valuable experience (Djarum Foundation, 2024). Participation in events can also help increase athlete motivation, hone skills, and create valuable experiences that encourage them to continue training and developing (Zidan et al. , 2025). Research shows that participation in competitions can contribute to improving the technical and mental skills of young athletes. (Weiss&Chaumonton, 2024).

Previous studies on the development of young female soccer players show that participation in soccer activities from an early age contributes significantly to the formation of children's personalities and social interactions, confirming sports as an important means of character development.. (Sudharma & Nurodin, 2025). Events like this also serve as a platform for discovering talented athletes who can be further developed to achieve higher levels of performance. (Yachsie, et al., 2022). Previous studies have not specifically explained the impact of the MilkLife Soccer Challenge event, which is a forum for coaching young female soccer players, particularly on the development of athletes in the city of Semarang itself.

This study specifically highlights the impact of the MilkLife Soccer Challenge event on the development of young female soccer players, given the importance of continuous and progressive coaching to achieve success. (Fathur & Yuwono, 2023). With the event already underway, there is a need for a study that describes the impact of this event on the development of female soccer players in Semarang, especially at an early age, so that there is material for evaluation and understanding of the coaching system through tiered events to foster aspects of early age female soccer development in Semarang. Based on the description of the phenomenon above, the researcher intends to conduct this study to identify the impact of the MilkLife Soccer Challenge event on the development of young female soccer athletes in the city of Semarang. The main focus of this study is to explore how participation in this event contributes to the development of athletes in several key aspects.

First, this study aims to analyze the improvement of athletes' technical skills, including their tactical abilities and understanding of the game. By measuring these skills, it is hoped that the extent to which this event helps athletes improve their performance on the field can be identified. Second, this study aims to assess the impact of the event on athletes' motivation. Increased motivation to train and compete, as well as factors that influence motivation, such as family and coach support, will be the focus of the analysis. This study aims to understand how the experience of this event

can foster athletes' confidence and desire to perform better. Furthermore, this study will also explore the impact on early age women's soccer coaching in the city of Semarang.

Overall, this study aims to provide recommendations for coaches, event organizers, and stakeholders in developing better training programs and events in the future. Thus, this study not only aims to evaluate the direct impact of the MilkLife Soccer Challenge, but also to provide valuable insights into strengthening the development of early age women's soccer in the city of Semarang.

2. Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative research design. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to describe the experiences and perspectives of research subjects in detail. (Creswell & Poth, 2021). The research design is descriptive, allowing researchers to present and explain the phenomena that occur, particularly regarding the impact of sporting events. This design is important in providing a clear picture of the perceptions and experiences of the research subjects. (Heri Setiawan, 2021)

The subjects of this study consisted of athletes, coaches, and administrators of the Semarang City Football Association (PSSI) who were involved in the event. The population consisted of 19 participants, including 15 athletes, 3 coaches, and 1 administrator of the Semarang City Football Association (PSSI). The sample was selected based on their roles and direct involvement in the MilkLife Soccer Challenge event in Semarang. This sampling method ensures that the information obtained is relevant and comprehensive.

The data collection techniques used in this study were in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation to obtain research data. Data validity was ensured through data triangulation, which combined interviews, observation, and documentation to ensure data validity. According to the *Institute for Global Health*, triangulation is conducted to accelerate the use of available data for interpretation and to support evidence-based policy and program development. This process involves testing information through various methods, groups, and populations so that the results obtained show consistency between data. (Institute for Global Health, 2021).

The research instruments consisted of interview questions, observational notes, and supporting documentation. The data analysis process utilized the interactive qualitative analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which involves three stages, first data reduction the process of simplifying and selecting key data from interviews and observations. Second, data presentation, which is the systematic organization of data into descriptive narratives or tables. Third, drawing conclusions and verification, the process of formulating research findings based on the analyzed and verified data (Garina Darmanah, 2021).

3. Result

The MilkLife Soccer Challenge is an early age girls' soccer development program initiated by the Djarum Foundation's Bhakti Olahraga in collaboration with MilkLife as its main sponsor. This program is designed as a tiered competition that focuses not only on match results but also on the development of technical skills, competitive experience, and participation in early age girls' soccer.

The event is structured in stages, with regional competitions followed by national-level matches featuring All-Star teams from each region. The match format used is 7 vs. 7 for the U-10 and U-12 age groups, along with a Skill Challenge that tests dribbling, passing, shooting, and individual abilities. For the U-8 age group, the event features a soccer festival.

During the series in Semarang, this event showed significant participation, which tended to increase between series, as can be seen in the table.

Table 1. Data on the organization of the Milklife event series in Semarang

Series/Year	Date	Number of teams	Number of athletes
-/2024	8-11 August 2024	64 teams	692 students
1/2024-2025	18-22 December 2024	110 teams	1.210 students
2/2024-2025	12-16 February 2025	112 teams	1.225 students
1/2025-2026	5-10 August 2025	112 teams	1.213 students
2/2025-2026	13-18 January 2026	119 teams	1.239 students

The findings from interviews, observations, and documentation also show that this event has an impact on four main aspects, so the discussion will cover the motivation and interest of athletes, competition experience, improvement in technical skills, and the development of women's soccer coaching in the city of Semarang.

Table 2. Research findings (coding tema)

Main theme	Sub-theme	Data source
Athlete Motivation	Increased enthusiasm for training	Interviews with athletes and coaches
	Increased self-confidence	Interviews with athletes
Competition Experience	Learning game strategies	Interviews with coaches
	Teamwork	Observation of matches
Technical Skills	Improved passing	Observation and coaches
	Improved dribbling	Observation
	Improved shooting	Observation and coach interviews
Development of Women's	Soccer Increased athlete participation	PSSI administrators
	Emergence of new athletes	Coach interviews

In terms of motivation and interest, athletes showed that this event had an impact, with data indicating that athletes were motivated to compete again after the series, with an increase in the number of participants in each series, proving that this event attracted interest in becoming a female soccer athlete at an early age in particular. Competitive experience is also one of the aspects that has an impact, namely in the process of coaching a sport, competitive experience is one of the keys to success. This event provides competitive experience for young children through structured competitions so that athletes have a greater opportunity to improve. Skill improvement is one of

the most visible impacts of this event. Athletes have improved their skills, such as shooting, dribbling, and other techniques during matches or skill challenge competitions. The development of soccer coaching in Semarang has begun to show with the implementation of the Semarang PSSI program for women's soccer after this event. This finding indicates that competition not only impacts individual athletes but also contributes to the overall athlete development system. This result is consistent with the concept of Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD), which emphasizes the importance of competition as an integral part of long-term athlete development. However, this study highlights a unique aspect in the local context, namely a significant increase in participation within a relatively short period following the implementation of the event.

4. Discussion

Improving Athletes' Motivation and Interest

A positive motivational environment in sports has a significant relationship with the psychological development of young athletes, particularly in increasing motivation, engagement, and positive sports experiences (Gu & Cheng, 2025). Motivation is an important factor that influences student involvement in sports activities, where coach support, interest in sports activities, and the training environment are the main factors that encourage young athletes to participate in sports activities (Susanto, Imam Santosa Ciptaning Wahyu W, 2025). This is in line with research findings that show that the MilkLife Soccer Challenge event has a positive impact on increasing the motivation and interest of young female soccer players. Based on interviews with the athletes, most respondents stated that participating in the MilkLife Soccer Challenge event provided them with new experiences that encouraged them to train more actively and increased their desire to continue developing their soccer skills.

Jihaan Lynta, an athlete from SDN Sendangmulyo 02, said that participating in this event motivated her to train more seriously than before. "After participating in the MilkLife Soccer Challenge, I feel more enthusiastic about training because I want to play better in the next series." A similar statement was also conveyed by Yola, an athlete from SDN Tandang 04, who revealed that the experience of competing was able to increase their confidence in playing soccer. "At first, I was shy when playing against other teams, but after several matches, I became more confident and dared to compete with other teams."

In addition, a statement from the coach, Febrian Dwi Hartanto from SDN Sendangmulyo 02, said that the existence of the competition made them more diligent and motivated to train and get involved in more competitive soccer schools. "After this event and winning the competition, the athletes are more diligent in training, and many have started to join the women's SSB in the city of Semarang."

These findings indicate that competitions can be an important factor in increasing the motivation of young athletes. Competitions provide athletes with the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities and gain experience of both success and failure, which can motivate them to learn for the future (Dongoran, et al., 2025). Competitive experience plays an important role in building athletes' intrinsic motivation because it provides challenges that encourage individuals to continue developing their abilities. Children's involvement in organized sports can increase their long-term commitment to sporting activities and strengthen their identity as athletes (Edison, et al., 2021). Thus, the MilkLife Soccer Challenge competition not only serves as a competitive arena, but also

as a means of motivating female soccer players in a more intensive and focused manner, particularly in the city of Semarang.

Competitive Experience as a Learning Tool

Competitive experience is an important component in the process of developing athletes' skills because it helps improve decision-making abilities in the game. Through competitive experience, athletes learn to read the game situation and choose the most effective actions according to the conditions faced (Muñoz-Llerena et al., 2022). The results of the study show that this event provides a very important competitive experience for the development of young female soccer players. Competitive experience allows athletes to implement the skills they have learned both in matches and during training so that they can understand the dynamics of the game firsthand. Based on observations during the match, athletes learn about various aspects of the game such as teamwork, decision making, and game strategy. This shows that matches can serve as an effective learning tool for young athletes. This is reinforced by Febrian Dwi Hartanto, coach of SDN Sendangmulyo 02, who said, "Matches provide experiences that cannot be gained from training alone. The children learn to read the game and work together with their team."

Coach Althariq Bagus Istianto of SDN Klepu 03 also emphasized that competition experience helps athletes understand the game situations in competitions, "When competing, they must make quick decisions, thereby developing their playing skills."

This is in line with the opinion that match experience is an important component in the development of soccer players because it can help improve decision-making skills and understanding of game tactics. Through dynamic game situations, players learn to read the game conditions and determine the most appropriate actions (Heisler et al., 2023; Silva et al., 2021). One of the athletes from SDN Tandang 04, Joevita Joice, revealed that the competition helped them understand how to play better. "During the competition, I learned how to pass the ball accurately to my teammates and find a good position."

The experience of facing pressure in competition can help athletes develop their adaptability and improve their mental resilience in sports competitions (Mojtahedi et al., 2023). Not only that, other studies also show that playing experience in matches contributes to improving game understanding and developing tactical skills in young soccer players (Roca, et al., 2025). Thus, participation in sports competitions has become an important component in the process of developing young athletes, especially women's soccer players in Semarang.

Improvement of Technical Playing Skills

Experience playing in matches is one of the important factors in developing the technical and tactical skills of soccer players (Machado, et al., 2023). The MilkLife Soccer Challenge event also had an impact on improving the basic soccer skills of young female athletes. Based on observations and interviews with coaches, athletes showed improvement in several basic technical aspects such as passing, dribbling, and shooting. According to Bangga Syahrani, coach of SDN Tandang 04, "After participating in the MilkLife Soccer event, the children's skills, such as ball control and passing, have improved. They now understand the correct techniques, whereas before they were just doing it randomly."

Febrian Dwi Hartanto, coach of SDN Sendangmulyo 02, also believes that this event helps athletes understand the technical mistakes they make so they can improve during training. "Through the matches, they learn from their mistakes, so during training they are more focused on improving their playing techniques."

This is in line with the opinion (Bergmann, et al., 2021) states that competitive experience can help improve players' coordination and ability to adapt to game situations. Not only that, Brigita Prawestri, an athlete from SDN Sendangmulyo 02, also said that competition made her more confident in performing her soccer skills. "Now I am more confident in dribbling the ball and trying to shoot at the goal when I am in front of the opponent's goal."

These findings indicate that competitive experience can help improve the technical skills of young soccer players. Competitions provide athletes with the opportunity to apply the technical skills they have learned during training to competitive game situations. Game-based learning in soccer can improve players' technical skills and tactical understanding through direct involvement in game situations (Faridatul 'Ala, et al., 2025). In addition, according to (Price & Collins, 2024) It also shows that involvement in soccer games helps improve technical skills and understanding of the game in young players. In team sports such as soccer, player performance develops through continuous interaction with a dynamic playing environment. Game situations that require decision-making and adaptation to the movements of opponents and teammates provide opportunities for players to develop technical skills and tactical understanding (Coutinho et al., 2023). Thus, it can be said that the MilkLife Soccer Challenge event has a positive impact on improving the basic soccer skills of young female athletes. Through the experience of competing, athletes can apply their soccer skills, and it also serves as an effective learning tool in supporting the development of the technical skills of young female soccer players.

The Development of Women's Soccer Coaching in Semarang City

Athlete development system. Structured competitions provide athletes with opportunities to gain more experience in competition, develop their skills, and follow a continuous development path towards achieving higher levels of performance (Eime, et al., 2022). In addition to impacting the development of individual athletes, the results of the study also show that the MilkLife Soccer Challenge event contributes to the development of women's soccer coaching at the regional level, particularly in Semarang. Holding sports competitions at the regional level can increase participation in sports and help discover potential athletes (Arya & Wijaya, 2022). Agung, the secretary of the PSSI Semarang City, said, "With this competition, more and more girls are interested in playing soccer, as seen from the increasing number of soccer schools in Semarang that children want to join. Women's soccer in Semarang has grown rapidly after the MilkLife event and has begun to grow through the formation of ASBWI in Semarang as their forum."

The organization of sports competitions plays an important role in expanding women's participation and creating sustainable athlete development pathways (Eime et al., 2022). Coach Althariq Bagus Istianto of SDN Klepu 03, who is also part of the AllStar Semarang coaching team, stated that competitions help in the process of identifying talented athletes who have the potential for further development. "Through tournaments like this, we can see players who have the potential to be trained more seriously. Through the AllStar team, we can identify talented players who have the potential to be trained more seriously."

This finding shows that sports competitions can serve as an important means of strengthening the athlete development system at the regional level. Increased social support, empowerment programs, and broader opportunities in sports activities can encourage greater participation of women in sports activities (Tamba, et al., 2024). In addition, organizing women's sports competitions can help increase participation and development of female athletes (Rawe, 2025). Research (Adriaanse, 2024), also shows that increasing opportunities to participate in competitive sports is an important strategy in developing women's sports. Support through women's sports competitions can help strengthen the female athlete development system (Eime et al., 2022).

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the MilkLife Soccer Challenge event had a positive impact on the development of young female soccer players in the city of Semarang. This impact can be seen in four main aspects, namely increased motivation and interest among athletes, increased competition experience, improved basic technical skills, and the development of a women's soccer coaching system in the city of Semarang. Based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation, as well as expert theories on motivation, participation in competitions can increase enthusiasm for training, self-confidence, and the desire of athletes to continue participating in soccer activities more seriously. In terms of competition experience, competitions provide opportunities for athletes to learn to understand the dynamics of the game, teamwork, and decision-making skills in match situations. In addition, competition experience also contributes to the improvement of basic technical skills such as passing, dribbling, and shooting through the application of skills in competition. The MilkLife Soccer Challenge event also contributes to the development of early age women's soccer coaching in the city of Semarang, with an increase in the number of participants from 692 athletes with 64 teams in August 2024, which continues to increase in each series to 1,239 athletes with 119 teams in January 2026, indicating that this competition is able to attract greater interest from girls -girls to participate in soccer and opens opportunities to identify potential young athletes who can be nurtured more sustainably. Thus, the MilkLife Soccer Challenge event is not only a competition but also a means of coaching young female soccer players more effectively in supporting the development of early age women's soccer, particularly in increasing participation, improving player skills, and strengthening the early age women's soccer coaching ecosystem in the city of Semarang.

Based on the research results, there are several recommendations that can be implemented, namely, the organizers are expected to maintain the sustainability of the MilkLife Soccer Challenge program and expand the scope of the competition so that more young female soccer athletes have the opportunity to participate and develop their potential. Additionally, national soccer organizations such as the Indonesian Soccer Association are expected to continue strengthening their support for the development of women's soccer through the provision of sustainable development pathways, an increase in the number of early age competitions, and talent development programs for female athletes that are not solely reliant on private entities.

Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank all those involved in this research, including the physical education teachers at SDN Sendangmulyo 02, SDN Tandang 04, and SDN Klepu 03, as well as all the athletes and administrators of the Semarang City Football Association (PSSI) who served as sources for

this research. The author also extends gratitude to the supervisor and academic team of the Faculty of Sports Science (FIK) at Semarang State University for their guidance and support in the writing of this article. Finally, it is hoped that this article may contribute scientifically to the development of a training system for female soccer athletes, particularly those at the early stages of their careers.

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