



Factors Influencing Lesbianism Among Female Football Players in West Java: A Sociocultural Analysis

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the factors influencing the sexual orientation of lesbian female football players in West Java and its implications for their personal and professional lives. Using a descriptive quantitative approach, data were collected through a Likert-scale questionnaire covering three main categories: background, reasons for attraction, and future expectations. The sample consisted of 37 respondents selected through purposive sampling. The analysis revealed that the environment was the dominant factor influencing players' sexual orientation, with the highest average score of 3.38. The nature of football, which fosters close interaction among female players, was the primary reason for attraction (average 2.6). However, respondents also faced challenges related to insecurity in openly expressing their sexual identity in the football environment (average 1.78).

Future expectations indicated a tendency to conform to social norms, such as marrying a male partner for societal acceptance and a more stable life (average 3.49), while support for the legalization of same-sex marriage was low (average 1.46–1.68). Simple regression analysis showed a significant influence between background and reasons for attraction ($p < 0.05$), whereas Pearson correlation analysis revealed a positive relationship between reasons for attraction and future expectations ($r = 0.350$). This study highlights the need for an inclusive sports environment to reduce stigma and discrimination against players with diverse sexual orientations.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership Women's football in Indonesia, particularly in West Java, has experienced significant growth in recent decades. However, along with this development, various social challenges persist, including issues related to gender and sexual orientation. One of the lesser-explored topics in Indonesian sports research is the presence of lesbian female football players and how their sexual orientation affects their personal and professional lives (Boellstorff, 2003; Kamila & Casmini, 2020). The relationship between sports, gender identity, and sexual orientation has been widely studied in Western contexts, but research in Indonesia remains limited due to cultural sensitivities and societal taboos (Murtagh, 2011a; Yanggo, 2018).

Globally, there has been growing attention to inclusivity and diversity in sports, with many organizations advocating for a safer and more accepting environment for LGBTQ+ athletes (Cunningham, 2015; Griffin, 1998). However, in Indonesia, where traditional gender norms and conservative societal values dominate, lesbian athletes often face stigma, discrimination, and social exclusion (Hapsarini, 2014; Rahayu et al., 2023). The general perception that associates women's football with masculinity further exacerbates stereotypes, sometimes leading to marginalization within the sports community (Faridatunnisa, 2010; Meilani et al., 2018).

Research indicates that the social environment plays a significant role in shaping an individual's sexual identity and personal relationships. In the case of female football players, the close-knit nature of teams, frequent physical interactions, and shared experiences contribute to interpersonal attraction and identity

exploration (Khoirunnisa, 2022; Murtagh, 2011b). However, many athletes struggle with societal expectations, which pressure them to conform to traditional gender roles, often leading to internal conflicts regarding their identity (Dolance & Messner, 2003; Dworkin & Messner, 2002).

West Java presents a unique context for examining these dynamics, as it is a region with a rich football culture yet strong conservative values (Hapsarini, 2014; Rahayu et al., 2023). Studies have shown that lesbian players in Indonesia experience difficulties in openly expressing their identity due to fears of discrimination, exclusion from teams, and career limitations (Lee Badgett et al., 2017). This aligns with broader findings on LGBTQ+ athletes worldwide, where societal acceptance often dictates their experiences and career opportunities (Denison et al., 2021; Xiang et al., 2023).

The primary objective of this study is to explore the factors influencing the sexual orientation of lesbian female football players in West Java. By analyzing team dynamics and the football environment, this research seeks to understand how these elements contribute to identity formation and interpersonal attraction among players. Additionally, this study aims to assess the challenges faced by lesbian athletes, including stigma, discrimination, and societal expectations that may affect their personal and professional lives. Furthermore, it explores the future expectations and coping strategies adopted by these athletes as they navigate their identities within the sports community. Ultimately, this research aims to provide recommendations for fostering a more inclusive and supportive sports environment in Indonesia, ensuring equal

opportunities and a safer space for athletes of diverse sexual orientations.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive quantitative method to identify and describe the factors influencing the sexual orientation of lesbian female football players in West Java, as well as the implications of this Data were gathered using a questionnaire that covered three main categories: background, reasons for attraction, and future expectations (X_1 , X_2 , X_3) as factors and implications.

Each category contains a different number of statements: Background (X_1) with 12 items, Reasons for Attraction (X_2) with 5 items, and Future Expectations (X_3) with 11 items. A Likert scale was used, where 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Agree (A), and 4 = Strongly Agree (SA). Female football players from West Java were selected using purposive sampling to match the research focus. The questionnaire was distributed to 100 respondents, but only 37 met the criteria.

The data were analyzed using SPSS software, including descriptive statistics to illustrate frequency distributions and means for each indicator. Additionally, simple regression analysis was used to examine the influence of background on reasons for attraction, while Pearson correlation analysis was applied to evaluate the relationship between reasons for attraction and future expectations.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are divided into two sections: descriptive statistics and simple regression analysis with pearson correlation. Furthermore, descriptive statistics is subdivided

into two parts: frequency distribution and mean analysis. The frequency distribution groups data into specific categories to show the number or percentage of respondents who provided answers in each category, and help to illustrate patterns or trends in the sample's responses to the questionnaire statements.

Table 2. SPSS Output of Frequency Distribution for Background (X_1)

Background_ X_1	Likert Scale			
	SD	D	A	SA
($X_{1.1}$)	8	4	17	8
($X_{1.2}$)	11	13	6	7
($X_{1.3}$)	16	8	9	4
($X_{1.4}$)	1	3	14	19
($X_{1.5}$)	7	8	13	9
($X_{1.6}$)	15	8	7	7
($X_{1.7}$)	19	11	3	4
($X_{1.8}$)	10	9	8	10
($X_{1.9}$)	13	13	9	2
($X_{1.10}$)	10	18	6	3
($X_{1.11}$)	7	10	13	7
($X_{1.12}$)	14	14	5	4

The frequency distribution analysis for the Background category (X_1) shows that respondents agreed (A) or strongly agreed (SA) that lesbianism was influenced by ($X_{1.1}$) entering the football community and ($X_{1.4}$) the environment being the main factor influencing sexual orientation. Conversely, they disagreed (D) or strongly disagreed (SD) with statements such as ($X_{1.10}$) not receiving support from the football environment regarding their sexual orientation and ($X_{1.17}$) feeling safe revealing their sexual identity in the football environment.

Table 3. SPSS Output of Frequency Distribution for Reasons for Attraction (X_2)

Reasons For Attraction_ X_2	Likert Scale			
	STS	TS	S	SS
($X_{2.1}$)	8	13	11	5
($X_{2.2}$)	10	11	15	1
($X_{2.3}$)	8	11	12	6
($X_{2.4}$)	8	12	15	2
($X_{2.5}$)	7	4	21	5

Respondents agreed (A) or strongly agreed (SA) that the reasons for attraction to lesbianism were influenced by (X_{2.5}) the environment in football that encourages closer relationships among women and (X_{2.3}) attraction to sexual orientation due to mutual understanding. They disagreed (D) or strongly disagreed (SD) with statements such as (X_{2.1}) close relationships with same-sex teammates influencing their sexual orientation and (X_{2.2}) attraction being influenced by physical interaction in football.

Table 4. SPSS Output of Frequency Distribution for Future Expectations (X₃)

Future Expectations_X ₃	Likert Scale			
	STS	TS	S	SS
z(X _{3.1})	26	4	3	4
(X _{3.2})	27	3	2	5
(X _{3.3})	25	8	3	1
(X _{3.4})	25	6	4	2
(X _{3.5})	8	8	9	12
(X _{3.6})	3	3	10	21
(X _{3.7})	4	1	10	22
(X _{3.8})	6	8	10	13
(X _{3.9})	3	-	12	22
(X _{3.10})	3	3	11	20
(X _{3.11})	4	1	5	27

Respondents' future expectations showed a preference for (X_{3.11}) marrying a male partner to make life easier, especially in terms of having children and (X_{3.9}) being accepted by society if they are in a normal relationship. They did not desire (X_{3.2}) legally recognized same-sex marriage or (X_{3.5}) marrying a male partner despite feeling comfortable in same-sex relationships.

The mean analysis provides a general tendency of respondents' responses to each category, simplifying complex data and helping to identify dominant trends.

Table 5. SPSS Output of Mean for Background (X₁)

		X1.1	X1.2	X1.3	X1.4	X1.5	X1.6	X1.7	X1.8	X1.9	X1.10	X1.11	X1.12
N	Valid	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		2.66	2.24	2.03	3.38	2.65	2.16	1.78	2.49	2.00	2.05	2.54	1.97
Median		2.00	2.00	2.00	4.00	3.00	2.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	3.00	2.00
Mode		3	2	1	4	3	1	1	1*	1*	2	3	1*
Minimum		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Maximum		4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4

The mean analysis of the Background (X₁) indicator shows that the item with the highest average score is (X_{1.4}) "The environment is the primary factor influencing sexual orientation," with a mean score of 3.38, indicating that the majority of respondents generally agreed that their surroundings played a significant role in their sexual orientation development. This aligns with previous research suggesting that social interactions in team sports can create spaces for self-exploration and identity formation (Lenskyj, 1990; Mann & Krane, 2018). Conversely, the lowest mean score was found in (X_{1.7}) "I feel safe expressing my sexual orientation in the football environment," with a score of 1.78, reflecting a strong tendency toward strongly disagree (SD), and highlighting the presence of stigma and potential discrimination (O'Connell & Bottino, 2024).

Overall, most items, such as X_{1.1}, X_{1.5}, and X_{1.11}, had mean scores around 2.5, suggesting that respondents generally leaned toward agree (A). However, some items, including X_{1.2}, X_{1.3}, and X_{1.12}, had mean scores of approximately 2.0, indicating a tendency toward disagree (D).

Table 6. SPSS Output of Mean for Reasons for Attraction (X₂).

		X2.1	X2.2	X2.3	X2.4	X2.5
N	Valid	37	37	37	37	37
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		2.35	2.19	2.43	2.30	2.65
Median		2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	3.00
Mode		2	3	3	3	3
Minimum		1	1	1	1	1
Maximum		4	4	4	4	4

The descriptive analysis results indicate that the average scores for the five items (X_{2.1} to X_{2.5}) range from 2.19 to 2.65, suggesting that

respondents' overall assessments fall within the moderate category. The item with the highest mean score is (X_{2.5}) "The football environment fosters closer relationships among women" at 2.6, followed by (X_{2.3}) "I am attracted to my sexual orientation due to mutual understanding" at 2.43. This supports the idea that same-gender environments, particularly in sports, can strengthen emotional and physical bonds, leading to attraction (McCormack & Anderson, 2014). However, physical interactions (X_{2.2}), such as close contact in training or matches, were not found to be the primary drivers of attraction (mean = 2.19). Instead, emotional understanding and shared experiences emerged as more significant factors, similar to findings from Western studies on LGBTQ+ athletes (Symons, 2010).

Table 7. SPSS Output of Mean for Future Expectations (X₃)

	X3.1	X3.2	X3.3	X3.4	X3.5	X3.6	X3.7	X3.8	X3.9	X3.10	X3.11
N	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37
Valid	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	1.59	1.68	1.46	1.54	2.68	3.32	3.35	2.81	3.43	3.30	3.49
Median	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Mode	1	1	1	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Minimum	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Maximum	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4

The descriptive analysis results indicate that the mean scores for variables X_{3.1} to X_{3.4} fall within the low category (1.46–1.68), reflecting respondents' generally negative perception of these items. The average scores begin to increase with X_{3.5} (2.68) and reach the high category for X_{3.6} to X_{3.11} (3.30–3.49). The highest mean score is found in (X_{3.11}) "Marrying a male partner will make my life easier, particularly in terms of having children," with an average of 3.49.

Simple regression was used to evaluate the influence of background on reasons for attraction, while Pearson correlation was used to test the relationship between reasons for attraction and future expectations.

Table 8. ANOVA Results for the Effect of Background on Reasons for Attraction

ANOVA ^a					
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
1	Regression	288.380	1	288.380	36.258
	Residual	278.377	35	7.954	
	Total	566.757	36		

a. Dependent Variable: Alasan Keterarikan

b. Predictors: (Constant), Latar Belakang

The SPSS output indicates that the F-value is 36.258, with a significance level (sig) of 0.000 < 0.05, suggesting a significant influence of (X) background on (Y) reasons for attraction among lesbian female football players in West Java.

Table 9. Pearson Correlation Analysis

Correlations			
		Alasan Keterarikan	Harapan Masa depan
Alasan Keterarikan	Pearson Correlation	1	.350 [*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.034
	N	37	37
Harapan Masa depan	Pearson Correlation	.350 [*]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.034	
	N	37	37

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Based on the SPSS output of the Pearson correlation analysis, there is a positive and significant relationship between reasons for attraction and future expectations, with a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.350. The significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) is 0.034, which is lower than the 0.05 significance level, indicating that this relationship is statistically significant.

This finding suggests that the higher a player's level of attraction toward same-sex relationships, the more their future expectations are influenced. However, while the relationship between reasons for attraction and future expectations is significant, the correlation strength is classified as weak to moderate, implying that although a connection exists, other factors beyond the measured variables may also contribute to shaping the players' future expectations.

This study reveals that environmental factors play a dominant role in shaping the sexual orientation of lesbian female football players in West Java. The majority of respondents acknowledged that the football environment encouraged them to explore their sexual identity, as indicated by the high mean score on statements regarding the influence of environmental factors. However, on the other hand, respondents felt unsafe expressing their sexual identity openly within the football community, as reflected by the low mean score. This contradiction highlights the contrast between acceptance within the small sports community and broader societal pressure.

In the context of reasons for attraction, the study found that interpersonal dynamics play a crucial role. Respondents tended to assign higher scores to statements suggesting that habits within football, such as close interactions among female players, influenced their sexual attraction. Furthermore, mutual understanding among teammates was also a significant factor, with a mean score of 2.43. Conversely, physical interactions and close relationships between players were not considered dominant factors, as indicated by the lower average scores.

Regarding future expectations, most respondents demonstrated a tendency to conform to social norms. They expressed a preference for marrying a male partner for social acceptance and ease in building a family, with the highest mean score (3.49). Meanwhile, expectations related to the legalization of same-sex marriage received lower mean scores (1.46–1.68), reflecting limited acceptance of this concept, both among respondents and within society in general. This indicates that social

pressure remains a significant barrier for individuals with diverse sexual orientations.

Further analysis revealed a relationship between background and reasons for attraction, as demonstrated by a simple regression test, which indicated a significant influence ($p < 0.05$). Additionally, Pearson's correlation analysis showed a positive relationship between reasons for attraction and future expectations ($r = 0.350$), although the correlation strength was classified as weak to moderate. This suggests that players' reasons for attraction influence their perspectives on future expectations, although other factors beyond this study may also contribute to shaping their outlook on the future.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights that environmental factors play a major role in shaping the sexual orientation of lesbian female football players in West Java. While reasons for attraction are primarily interpersonal, future expectations tend to align with social conformity, as most respondents expressed a desire to marry a male partner for societal acceptance. The findings underscore the importance of fostering an inclusive sports environment that supports diversity and reduces stigma. Policies and educational programs promoting inclusivity in sports can help mitigate discrimination and social pressure, ultimately improving both athlete well-being and performance. Future research should explore additional factors influencing sexual orientation and social dynamics in women's football to gain a more comprehensive understanding of this issue.

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