



Football Supporter Activism as a Political Force in Modern Football Governance and Reform

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Info Articles

History Articles:

Received January 13, 2026

Approved April 23, 2026

Published June 05, 2026

Keywords:

collective mobilization; football governance; political participation; social media; supporter activism

Abstract

Football is no longer merely a form of sport and entertainment but has developed into a social arena in which political, cultural, and collective identities interact. This study analyzes the development of football supporter activism as a new form of sociopolitical participation and examines its implications for digital mobilization, club policies, and modern football governance. A qualitative approach was employed through a literature review of scholarly articles, research reports, and other relevant sources. The findings show that supporters have shifted from passive consumers to collective actors with significant social and political influence. Their activism addresses not only club-related interests but also social justice, inclusivity, human rights, and resistance to the excessive commercialization of football. Social media strengthens connective action by enabling rapid coordination across geographical boundaries and integrating online and offline activism. Supporter pressure also encourages clubs to adopt more inclusive, transparent, welfare-oriented, and socially responsible policies. In governance, supporters are increasingly recognized as stakeholders who promote accountability, regulatory reform, and more democratic ownership models. However, excessive commercialization, financial inequality, intergroup conflict, and inadequate digital regulation remain significant challenges. The study advances understanding of supporter activism and calls for adaptive, inclusive, and sustainable football policies.

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P-ISSN 2549-0737

E-ISSN 2621-6272

INTRODUCTION

Football is no longer understood merely as a sporting activity or a form of mass entertainment. Over recent decades, it has developed into a complex social arena in which politics, culture, identity, and economic interests continuously interact. Football reflects broader social dynamics and frequently provides a visible space for political and cultural struggles at both local and global levels (Olesen, 2018; Zaimakis, 2018a). Within this context, football supporter activism has emerged as an important phenomenon illustrating the transformation of supporters from passive spectators into active social and political actors. Supporters do not simply consume matches and club-related products; they also use their collective identities, organizational networks, and symbolic resources to express aspirations, defend community interests, and influence public debates. This transformation represents a shift from passive consumption toward active participation in social, cultural, and political issues, highlighting the potential of football supporters to act as agents of social change (Jack, 2024; Olesen, 2018; Putra, 2019).

The development of supporter activism has been closely connected to the increasing commercialization of football since the 1990s. Initially, many supporter movements concentrated on resisting higher ticket prices, corporate control, stadium redevelopment, and club policies considered harmful to local communities. Over time, however, these movements expanded beyond narrowly defined football-related concerns. Supporter activism increasingly addressed social justice, community solidarity, democratic participation, and public policy. Fitzpatrick and Hoey (2022) describe this development through the concept of “project identity,” in which a collective identity is mobilized not only to defend an existing community but also to promote broader social transformation. The experience of Liverpool FC, for example, demonstrates how land speculation and stadium expansion policies can create conflict between a club and its surrounding community. Similarly, German Ultras have repeatedly used collective action and public space to challenge the commercialization of football,

reinforcing the position of supporters as actors capable of contesting institutional and market power (Gang & Park, 2024a).

Supporter activism is also shaped by the specific political and socioeconomic conditions in which football communities operate. Studies from different countries show that supporters use football to express dissatisfaction with government policies, economic inequality, authoritarian practices, and human rights violations (Irak, 2018). In Croatia, supporter movements have responded to post-socialist transformation and European integration through protests and broader social mobilization (Hodges & Brentin, 2018). English supporters have organized walkouts, displayed banners, and participated in campaigns such as “Twenty’s Plenty” to oppose excessive ticket prices and the corporatization of football (Turner, 2017). In Brazil, the neoliberal transformation of football and preparations for major international tournaments contributed to the formation of organized movements such as the National Fans’ Association (Gaffney, 2015). Turkish supporters participated alongside other social groups in the Gezi protests, while Moroccan supporters have used chants, rituals, and subcultural practices to articulate resistance to systemic injustice (El Karmaoui, 2026; Karpiak & Garriott, 2018).

Comparable developments can be observed in Indonesia. Following the Kanjuruhan Stadium disaster, supporters from different clubs participated in peace campaigns, humanitarian actions, and cross-group solidarity initiatives while demanding improvements in football security and governance. Social media was used to disseminate messages of solidarity and institutional reform, while symbolic activities such as vigils and the laying of flower wreaths connected online communication with action in public spaces. These initiatives demonstrate that supporter identity can move beyond club rivalry and become a foundation for collective demands concerning safety, accountability, and justice. They also show how football communities can create alternative channels of public participation when confidence in formal institutions is limited.

Several theoretical perspectives have been employed to explain these developments. Castells’s theory of identity helps explain how shared supporter identities become resources for

social mobilization and collective action (Fitzpatrick & Hoey, 2022). The concept of cultural citizenship further demonstrates how supporters use football to express political values, social belonging, and claims to recognition within society (Spitaler, 2011; Zuser, 2022). Institutional theory emphasizes the relationship between supporters' perceptions of football governance and their expectations regarding democracy, accountability, and organizational legitimacy (Kossakowski et al., 2025). Meanwhile, relational and temporal approaches underline the importance of historical experiences, generational change, and evolving relationships among supporters, clubs, governing bodies, and the state (Lee Ludvigsen & Turner, 2026). Together, these perspectives suggest that supporter activism is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by identity, institutional arrangements, historical context, and political opportunity.

Three related concepts are particularly important for understanding football supporter activism. The first is collective identity, which creates solidarity and provides the foundation for coordinated action within supporter communities (Fitzpatrick & Hoey, 2022; Paffard & Pacheco, 2026a). The second is political articulation, referring to the ability of supporters to use football, stadiums, symbols, chants, and digital communication to express political ideas and collective demands (Zaimakis, 2018b; Zuser, 2022). The third is fan governance, which reflects growing demands for supporter representation in decision-making processes, particularly when formal football institutions are perceived as unaccountable or unresponsive (García & Llopis-Goig, 2020). These dimensions frequently intersect with broader struggles against racism, sexism, exclusion, and other forms of discrimination within football and society (Brunssen & Schüler-Springorum, 2021).

Digital media have further transformed the organization and reach of supporter activism. Social media platforms allow supporters to circulate information rapidly, coordinate campaigns, construct collective narratives, and connect local grievances with transnational networks. Digital communication also enables

participation beyond formal organizations and geographical boundaries, allowing dispersed supporters to contribute to campaigns and public debates. Nevertheless, online mobilization should not be treated as separate from physical activism. Digital campaigns are often connected to demonstrations, stadium protests, boycotts, walkouts, community initiatives, and other offline actions. Consequently, contemporary supporter activism operates through an interconnected field in which stadiums, urban public spaces, supporter organizations, and digital platforms reinforce one another.

Despite the growing body of literature, several research gaps remain. Existing studies are concentrated largely in Europe and the Americas, while football supporter activism in Asia and Africa remains comparatively underexamined (Zuser, 2022). The long-term influence of digital activism on supporter organizations, club policies, and football governance has also received insufficient attention (Paffard & Pacheco, 2026a). Moreover, limited comparative research across countries and political cultures makes it difficult to explain why similar supporter campaigns generate different organizational or policy outcomes (Coombs & Osborne, 2022; Numerato, 2018). Previous studies often examine commercialization, political protest, digital mobilization, or governance separately, leaving the relationship among these dimensions insufficiently integrated.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the development of football supporter activism as a contemporary form of sociopolitical participation and to examine its implications for digital mobilization, club policies, and modern football governance. Through a qualitative literature review, the study investigates how collective identity and digital communication enable supporters to influence organizational practices and broader political debates. It also seeks to identify the principal challenges confronting supporter activism and to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of football as an arena of political influence, particularly in underrepresented non-Western contexts.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a narrative literature review to examine football supporter activism as an emerging arena of political influence. A qualitative design was considered appropriate because it enabled an in-depth exploration of the meanings, patterns, and sociopolitical dynamics associated with football supporter activities. The literature review was used to synthesize previous research, identify key concepts and findings, and examine research gaps concerning supporter activism at the intersection of sport, politics, and social movements (Fitzpatrick & Hoey, 2022; Gang & Park, 2024b; Numerato, 2018).

The study relied on secondary data obtained from scholarly literature, including peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, conference proceedings, research reports, and other relevant academic publications. The reviewed literature covered various geographical contexts, including Europe, Asia, and cross-national or global studies. It also incorporated documented cases of football supporter mobilization, resistance to commercialization, political participation, and digital activism conducted through social media platforms (Chadwick et al., 2025; Hodges & Brentin, 2018; Millward, 2012).

Data were collected through a documentation study involving searches of academic databases, particularly Scopus and Google Scholar. The searches focused on literature concerning football supporter activism, collective identity, social movements, digital mobilization, supporter politics, and football governance. Publications were selected based on their relevance to the research objectives and their contribution to explaining the social and political dimensions of supporter activism. Literature unrelated to football supporters, collective mobilization, political participation, or organizational governance was excluded. The selected publications were subsequently organized according to their geographical context, theoretical perspective, methodological approach, and principal findings. Empirical cases reported in the selected literature were used to provide contextual illustrations rather than being treated as independently collected primary data.

The data were analyzed through qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis. The analysis began with a close reading of the selected literature to identify recurring arguments, concepts, and empirical findings. Initial categories included collective identity, resistance to commercialization, digital mobilization, political participation, supporter–club relations, and football governance. These categories were compared across the reviewed publications and consolidated into broader analytical themes. The findings were then interpreted using collective action theory and social identity theory to explain how football supporters develop solidarity, coordinate collective action, and exercise political influence (Chadwick et al., 2025; Fitzpatrick & Hoey, 2022). This analytical process produced four principal themes: the political activism of football supporters, mobilization through social media, effects on club policies and practices, and implications for football governance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Political Activism among Football Supporters

The analysis of the reviewed literature demonstrates that football supporter activism has developed into a form of political participation that frequently operates outside formal institutional channels. Supporter activities are no longer limited to attending matches, displaying loyalty, or defending club interests. They increasingly address broader concerns such as social justice, human rights, institutional accountability, and the commercialization of sport. This development has transformed football into a sociopolitical arena in which supporters articulate collective interests and challenge decisions made by clubs, governing bodies, commercial actors, and public authorities (Fitzpatrick & Hoey, 2022; Gang & Park, 2024b). The political significance of supporter activism therefore lies not only in its public visibility but also in its ability to convert shared identities into collective claims.

Collective identity emerged as a central mechanism underlying supporter mobilization. Research on Persela Lamongan supporters, particularly LA Mania and Curva Boys, shows that supporter identity is closely connected to the

cultural identity of the local community (Nidhomuddin & Suryandari, 2021). In this context, a football club functions as more than a sporting organization; it becomes a social symbol through which community members construct belonging, solidarity, and shared responsibility. This symbolic relationship helps explain why club-related disputes can generate collective action extending beyond the stadium. When supporters perceive that club policies threaten community values or interests, emotional attachment can be transformed into organized resistance. Thus, supporter activism is not produced solely by dissatisfaction with a particular decision but also by the belief that the club represents a community whose identity must be protected.

Resistance to commercialization represents one of the most prominent expressions of this activism. The Against Modern Football (AMF) movement illustrates opposition to the increasing dominance of market principles in football and promotes more democratic models of club governance, including the principle of “one member, one vote” (Mustapić, 2024). Such resistance reflects concerns that corporate ownership, rising costs, and commercially driven decisions may weaken the historical relationship between clubs and their communities. Solidarity within supporter groups provides the organizational basis for coordinated protest and collective decision-making (Fakhira et al., 2023). Globalization has also facilitated the circulation of protest symbols, organizational practices, and political ideas between supporter communities. Consequently, local supporter cultures increasingly interact with transnational movements that criticize dominant commercial and institutional arrangements (Hendika & Nuraeni, 2020). Commercialization therefore generates a dual effect: it expands football’s economic reach while simultaneously encouraging supporters to defend community ownership, accessibility, and democratic participation.

The political orientation of supporter activism varies according to its social and national context. In India, football supporters participated in protests related to the Citizenship Amendment Act, while supporter communities in Greece expressed solidarity and resistance

during periods of economic crisis and austerity (Bakali & Andersson, 2025; Priyansh, 2023b). These cases indicate that football communities can provide organizational networks through which broader political grievances are communicated. In Indonesia, The Jakmania’s involvement in the Jakarta regional election demonstrates how supporter organizations may influence local political dynamics by shaping public opinion and political preferences (Sabili et al., 2024). However, this influence does not mean that supporter communities are politically homogeneous. Evidence from Malaysia and Indonesia shows that strong collective identity can generate solidarity but may also intensify rivalry and conflict between groups (Hilmy et al., 2024). Collective identity should therefore be understood as an ambivalent political resource: it can facilitate cooperation and civic participation, but it can also reinforce exclusion and antagonism.

The reviewed studies also reveal that contemporary supporter activism operates through a combination of physical and digital spaces. Stadiums remain important locations for collective expression because banners, chants, boycotts, and coordinated displays provide immediate public visibility. Social media, however, extends the geographical reach and duration of these actions. Digital platforms allow supporters to exchange information, construct common narratives, and establish transnational networks that connect local concerns with global causes (Paffard & Pacheco, 2026b). Indonesian supporters, for example, have used football-related spaces to express solidarity with communities affected by the Rohingya and Palestinian conflicts (Perdana, 2018). Platforms such as Twitter and Instagram also facilitate intercultural interaction and strengthen global connections among supporter communities (Abiyyu, 2025).

This interaction between physical and digital activism changes the scale and organization of supporter mobilization. Digital communication lowers geographical barriers and allows campaigns to involve supporters who are not physically present in stadiums or club cities. Nevertheless, online visibility alone does not guarantee institutional change. Its political effectiveness depends on whether digital

communication can be connected to sustained organization, clearly formulated demands, and collective action in physical or institutional settings. The findings therefore suggest that digital platforms are most influential when they complement, rather than replace, established supporter networks and offline mobilization.

Supporter activism also faces significant structural constraints. Football federations, clubs, and state authorities may regard organized supporter action as a threat to institutional authority, public order, or security (Lee Ludvigsen & Turner, 2026). The conflict involving Persib Bandung and Persija Jakarta supporters, for example, has been interpreted not merely as a sporting rivalry but as an issue affecting social stability and national security (Fajar et al., 2020). Such cases can encourage authorities to adopt security-oriented responses that treat supporters primarily as potential sources of disorder. This approach may obscure the civic and democratic dimensions of supporter organizations. It also creates a paradox: supporter groups can contribute to solidarity, accountability, and political participation, yet their involvement in rivalry or violence may weaken their legitimacy as political stakeholders.

The effectiveness of supporter activism consequently varies across cases. Not every protest, boycott, or digital campaign produces a measurable policy change. Its influence depends on organizational cohesion, the clarity of collective demands, access to decision-makers, public support, and the willingness of institutions to respond. Despite these limitations, the literature indicates that supporter activism broadens opportunities for political participation and reshapes relationships among citizens, sporting institutions, and the state (Koch & Hanson, 2024; Numerato, 2018). Political influence should therefore not be measured exclusively through immediate policy outcomes. Changes in public discourse, institutional transparency, stakeholder recognition, and supporter representation may also constitute meaningful results.

Demands for transparency and accountability have had increasingly visible implications for club governance. Supporters frequently challenge policies perceived as harmful to their communities and demand

greater involvement in organizational decision-making. Communication between Bobotoh and the management of Persib Bandung demonstrates that two-way interaction can influence club policies and business strategies. An inclusive management response may strengthen supporter trust and loyalty, whereas unresponsive communication may intensify opposition (Haizi et al., 2025). Supporters also apply ethical pressure to commercial decisions. Bayern Munich supporters, for instance, demanded the termination of a sponsorship relationship associated with alleged human rights violations (Priyansh, 2023a). These findings show that supporters evaluate clubs not only according to sporting performance but also according to their social conduct and ethical commitments.

In modern football governance, supporters are therefore increasingly positioned as stakeholders rather than passive consumers. Their demands include transparency in ownership structures, particularly in relation to multi-club ownership, and resistance to policies considered inconsistent with community interests or social values (Herold et al., 2023; Trequattrini et al., 2025). Support for community-oriented clubs such as FC St. Pauli and Athletic Bilbao, together with the emergence of grassroots clubs, illustrates attempts to construct alternatives to market-dominated models of football organization (Groves, 2011; Kennedy & Kennedy, 2015; Totten, 2016). These alternatives do not eliminate commercial pressures, but they demonstrate that democratic participation, local identity, and financial sustainability can become competing principles within football governance.

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sustainability can become competing principles within football governance.

Effects on Club Policies and Practices

The reviewed literature shows that supporter pressure can influence club policies in several interconnected areas, including ticket pricing, accessibility, social responsibility, community engagement, and participation in organizational decision-making. These effects can be explained through the theory of *fan welfare maximization*, which argues that sports organizations should not evaluate performance exclusively in terms of profit or sporting success. Clubs must also consider the welfare and experience of their supporters as a central organizational objective. Policies that prioritize supporter interests are associated with more affordable ticket prices, higher match attendance, and improvements in the overall spectator experience (Madden, 2012). This perspective positions supporters as stakeholders whose interests should be incorporated into club governance rather than merely as consumers of sporting products.

The practical implications of fan welfare maximization become particularly important when clubs face tension between commercial objectives and community expectations. Increasing ticket prices, introducing premium services, or prioritizing commercially attractive audiences may generate short-term revenue but can reduce accessibility for traditional supporters. If these policies weaken attendance, trust, or identification with the club, they may also damage its social legitimacy. Supporter-oriented policies should therefore be understood not simply as financial concessions but as investments in the long-term relationship between a club and its community.

Supporter engagement is multidimensional and involves emotional, behavioral, and social relationships. Emotional engagement reflects identification with the club, while behavioral engagement includes attending matches, purchasing merchandise, participating in campaigns, and interacting with club content. Social engagement is expressed through relationships within supporter communities and participation in club-related activities. Because these dimensions are interconnected, clubs

should create meaningful opportunities for engagement in both online and offline environments. These may include supporter consultations, participation in selected decision-making processes, support for community activities, and responsive communication through social media (Popescu et al., 2025).

The findings suggest that supporter pressure can encourage clubs to adopt more inclusive policies, particularly in relation to ticket affordability and service accessibility. Supporters also increasingly evaluate clubs according to their commitment to social issues. Policies promoting inclusion, developing women's football, and opposing discrimination can strengthen the club's legitimacy among supporters who expect sporting organizations to demonstrate social responsibility (Hernández-Hernández et al., 2024b). These demands reflect a broader transformation in the supporter-club relationship: supporters judge clubs not only according to results on the field but also according to whether their policies are consistent with community values.

Supporter influence also has implications for clubs' social and economic sustainability. Highly active supporters contribute directly through ticket purchases, merchandise, membership fees, and regular participation in club activities. More geographically dispersed or less active supporters may contribute indirectly by expanding audiences, increasing media value, and strengthening the club's public visibility and reputation. These groups have different expectations and forms of participation, requiring clubs to balance the interests of local match-going communities with those of broader national and international audiences (Hernández-Hernández et al., 2025). Prioritizing one group excessively may generate conflict. A strong commercial focus on global audiences, for example, may alienate local supporters, while an exclusively local orientation may limit opportunities for economic expansion.

The relationship between supporter welfare and financial sustainability is therefore not necessarily contradictory. Affordable access, community trust, and a positive supporter experience can strengthen attendance, loyalty, and long-term revenue. Conversely, policies that treat supporters exclusively as sources of income

may produce short-term commercial gains but undermine the emotional and social foundations on which club value depends. Sustainable club management requires a balance between revenue generation and the preservation of supporter relationships.

Supporters also exert pressure on clubs to adopt corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices. The affective bond between supporters and their clubs strengthens expectations that clubs will respond to concerns relating to inclusivity, social justice, environmental sustainability, and community welfare (Hopwood & Skinner, 2013). CSR initiatives can provide clubs with opportunities to create shared social value while strengthening their legitimacy. However, these programs are unlikely to gain lasting supporter approval if they are primarily promotional or inconsistent with other club practices. Social responsibility must be reflected in substantive policies, transparent implementation, and sustained engagement with affected communities.

Decision-making represents another important dimension of the supporter–club relationship. Clubs may encounter collective or confrontational demands concerning ownership, internal policies, sponsorship, and sporting strategy. Relationship marketing offers one approach to managing these tensions by emphasizing trust, communication, satisfaction, and long-term engagement. Team identification and satisfaction with club performance influence supporter behavior, including stadium attendance, merchandise purchases, and positive word-of-mouth communication (Gray & Wert-Gray, 2012). Meaningful engagement can therefore generate commercial benefits while reducing the distance between supporters and management.

Nevertheless, relationship marketing has limitations when applied to supporter activism. Treating supporters only as customers whose loyalty must be maintained may overlook their political claims and stakeholder rights. Consultation should not be reduced to a promotional exercise designed to protect the club's reputation. For participation to be meaningful, clubs must communicate which issues are open to supporter influence, how supporter views are considered, and why

particular decisions are ultimately adopted. Transparent procedures can help prevent consultation from becoming merely symbolic.

Digital innovation creates additional opportunities and risks. Tokenization and related digital platforms may allow supporters to vote on selected issues or participate in club-related decisions (Stegmann et al., 2023). Such technology can expand participation beyond geographical boundaries and offer new forms of interaction. However, token-based participation may also intensify commercialization by connecting political influence to purchasing power. If supporters must buy digital assets to participate, financially stronger individuals may receive greater influence, while economically disadvantaged supporters may be excluded. Moreover, participation may remain superficial when voting is restricted to minor symbolic matters while important decisions concerning ownership, finance, or governance remain under managerial control.

The emotional attachment and sense of community associated with football remain essential resources for creating meaningful supporter experiences and strengthening loyalty (Mastromartino & Zhang, 2020). Clubs can reinforce these relationships by supporting supporter-led activities, preserving historical identities, facilitating dialogue, and recognizing the contribution of local communities. However, emotional attachment should not be exploited as a guarantee of continued consumption. Loyalty is more sustainable when supporters believe that their identities, values, and concerns are respected by the organization.

Implications for Football Governance and Policy

The reviewed literature identifies several implications of supporter activism for football governance and public policy. These implications concern the changing status of supporters, the need for participatory decision-making, the regulation of club ownership and finance, and the structural challenges affecting the football industry. A central finding is the gradual shift in the position of supporters from consumers of sporting products to stakeholders with legitimate interests in the policies of clubs and football organizations (García & Welford,

2015). This shift challenges governance models in which decisions are controlled exclusively by club owners, executives, federations, and commercial partners.

Football supporters are generally connected through structured communities capable of coordinating collective action, sustaining club identity, and shaping the social atmosphere surrounding competitions. They should therefore not be understood merely as isolated individuals purchasing tickets or merchandise. Supporter organizations operate as collective actors possessing social networks, organizational resources, historical identities, and the capacity to mobilize public pressure (Yanus et al., 2023). These characteristics give supporters a form of social power that can affect the legitimacy and reputation of football institutions. Governance systems that exclude organized supporters may consequently face resistance, declining trust, or conflict when policies are perceived as inconsistent with community interests.

Dissatisfaction with existing governance arrangements has generated demands for greater transparency, accountability, and participation in decision-making. Supporter activism frequently develops in response to excessive commercialization, opaque ownership structures, rising costs, and the perceived prioritization of private interests over community values. However, these movements are not concerned exclusively with commercial issues. They also advocate social justice, inclusion, institutional integrity, and the protection of football as a community institution (Numerato, 2018). This broader orientation indicates that football governance cannot be evaluated solely through financial performance or competitive success. Its legitimacy also depends on whether institutional practices are regarded as fair, transparent, and socially responsible.

Fan-based ownership models such as Supporters' Trusts offer one possible mechanism for increasing supporter participation. These organizations enable supporters to acquire a collective interest in a club and participate more directly in governance. They may be particularly relevant for clubs in lower and middle divisions, where strong community relationships can support organizational continuity and local accountability (Tobin, 2017). Supporter

ownership can strengthen democratic decision-making by providing formal channels for representation and reducing the distance between management and the community.

Nevertheless, supporter ownership should not be treated as a universal solution. Its effectiveness depends on access to financial resources, professional management capacity, legal recognition, and the ability to balance democratic participation with timely organizational decision-making. Supporters may obtain formal representation without gaining meaningful influence if ownership remains concentrated among dominant investors. Participatory governance therefore requires more than the symbolic presence of supporter representatives. Institutions must clearly define their authority, access to information, voting rights, and role in strategic decisions.

Supporter communities can also influence governance without becoming part of formal management structures. Their function as pressure groups allows them to affect club policies through campaigns, public communication, negotiation, and coordinated collective action. The Central Board of The Jakmania illustrates how an organized supporter association can strengthen its bargaining position through an approach described as rational and respectful (Djuyandi et al., 2021). This case suggests that sustained organization and credible representation can provide an alternative to spontaneous or confrontational forms of protest. It also demonstrates that clubs may respond more constructively when supporter demands are presented through recognized organizations with clear leadership and communication mechanisms.

However, formalization creates its own challenges. Supporter representatives may become distant from their members or may be incorporated into club structures without retaining sufficient independence. Clubs and governing bodies should therefore avoid using supporter organizations merely to legitimize decisions that have already been made. Effective representation requires regular consultation, transparent communication between representatives and members, and procedures through which supporter views can influence outcomes.

The policy implications of supporter activism extend beyond individual clubs to national regulation and institutional oversight. Middling and Philippou (2024) use debates concerning an independent regulator in English football to illustrate the need for stronger controls over club ownership, financial stability, and the protection of supporter interests. An independent oversight body may address governance failures that clubs or football associations cannot resolve through voluntary regulation. Its potential responsibilities can include assessing owners, monitoring financial practices, enforcing governance standards, and protecting clubs as socially significant institutions. The underlying principle is that football clubs produce public and community value that may be damaged by irresponsible private decision-making.

In Indonesia, stronger regulation is similarly associated with the need for integrity, transparency, and effective law enforcement. Comparative research referring to practices in the Netherlands and Italy highlights the importance of strengthening supervisory mechanisms and protecting individuals who report corruption or other violations (Waditra, 2025). Whistleblower protection is particularly significant in organizations where information is concentrated and individuals may face professional or social consequences for reporting misconduct. However, adopting international models requires attention to differences in legal systems, institutional capacity, ownership structures, and football cultures. Regulatory practices should therefore be adapted to the Indonesian context rather than transferred without modification.

Dialogue between supporters and authorities represents another important governance mechanism. Supporter Liaison Officers (SLOs) can provide structured communication among supporters, clubs, competition organizers, and security authorities. Evidence indicates that this role can contribute to conflict reduction and more effective crowd management by improving information exchange and building trust before problems escalate (Stott et al., 2020). An effective SLO should not function exclusively as a channel for delivering institutional instructions to supporters. The position should facilitate two-way communication and ensure that supporter

concerns are communicated to decision-makers. Adequate independence, professional competence, and recognition from supporter communities are therefore essential.

Despite these mechanisms, football governance continues to face significant structural challenges. Perceptions of corruption and persistent financial inequality weaken public confidence in football institutions (Kossakowski et al., 2025). Increasing commercialization may also widen the distance between clubs and their traditional supporter communities, especially when decisions are driven by investors, broadcasters, or transnational business networks (Fitzpatrick & Hoey, 2022). In such circumstances, clubs may formally consult supporters while retaining decision-making structures that provide them with little substantive influence. The expansion of multi-club ownership and other transnational arrangements further complicates accountability because organizational decisions may be made beyond the local or national environments in which their social consequences are experienced.

These challenges require policies that are inclusive, transparent, and responsive to the transnational dynamics of modern football (Llopis-Goig et al., 2026; Middling & Philippou, 2024). Inclusion requires formal mechanisms through which different supporter groups can participate, including local supporters, women, persons with disabilities, minority communities, and geographically dispersed supporters. Transparency requires accessible information concerning ownership, finances, sponsorship, and significant organizational decisions. Accountability requires enforceable standards, independent oversight, and appropriate sanctions rather than reliance on voluntary commitments alone.

The case of Bali United demonstrates the challenges involved in implementing Good Corporate Governance (GCG) at the club level. The available evidence indicates that its implementation has not yet been fully optimized. Governance improvements have been encouraged by AFC licensing requirements, demands for greater professionalism, efforts to attract sponsors, and the need to maintain organizational sustainability (Wayan et al., 2020). These pressures show how international

standards and commercial expectations can stimulate institutional reform. However, compliance with licensing requirements does not automatically produce accountable governance. Formal procedures must be supported by transparent implementation, effective supervision, and meaningful stakeholder participation.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that football supporter activism has developed into a significant form of sociopolitical participation in which supporters no longer function merely as passive consumers but as collective actors capable of influencing club policies, public debates, and football governance. The interaction between physical and digital spaces has expanded opportunities for participation, enabled rapid coordination across geographical boundaries, and connected online communication with protests and other forms of offline collective action. Social media strengthen supporter identity, solidarity, and organizational pressure, although hate speech, misinformation, polarization, and inadequate digital governance may limit their democratic potential. Supporters also influence club policies concerning ticket affordability, accessibility, social responsibility, community engagement, and organizational accountability. Clubs that recognize supporter welfare and provide transparent opportunities for participation are more likely to strengthen trust, legitimacy, and long-term social and economic sustainability. At the governance level, the increasing recognition of supporters as stakeholders encourages more participatory arrangements, including structured consultation, supporter liaison mechanisms, supporter-based ownership, and independent regulatory oversight. Nevertheless, excessive commercialization, financial inequality, institutional resistance, corruption, and weak regulation continue to restrict meaningful supporter influence. This study contributes to the literature by integrating political activism, digital mobilization, club policy, and football governance within a single analytical framework, thereby demonstrating that supporter influence is produced through the interaction of collective identity, organizational networks, digital

communication, and institutional opportunity. It also extends the discussion of supporter activism beyond dominant Western cases by emphasizing its relevance to developing football environments, particularly Indonesia. Future research should empirically examine how supporter campaigns generate concrete policy changes and compare clubs, leagues, and national contexts to assess the effectiveness of participatory governance models such as Supporters' Trusts. Further studies should also investigate how regulation can balance commercialization, meaningful supporter participation, organizational sustainability, and the protection of football's social and community value.

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