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THE ROLE OF SPORTS
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Abstract: Sport is not only understood as a physical activity, but also as a social phenomenon that influences interaction patterns, identity formation, and societal structures. This article aims to analyze the role of the sociology of sport in social life at the individual and group levels. The research uses a descriptive qualitative method through a literature review that examines various academic sources related to the social dynamics in sport practices. The results of the study indicate that at the individual level, sport plays a role in character formation, value socialization, and the development of social and emotional competencies such as discipline, cooperation, and sportsmanship. At the group and community level, sport functions as a medium for social cohesion, forming collective identity, and uniting multicultural societies. However, sport also reflects social inequality, commercialization, gender bias, and power relations as explained through Bourdieu's theoretical perspective. On the other hand, sport has transformative potential as an instrument of empowerment and social development when managed inclusively and equitably. Thus, a sociological understanding of sport is important in formulating sports policies and programs that can strengthen solidarity, foster individual character, and support social development.

Keywords: sociology of sport, social cohesion, individual character, social inequality, community development.

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INTRODUCTION

Sport is a universal phenomenon that not only functions as a physical activity but also has social, cultural, and psychological dimensions that influence social life. Through sport, individuals and groups can build identity, strengthen solidarity, and cultivate moral values such as sportsmanship, discipline, and responsibility. In a sociological context, sport is viewed as part of the social system that shapes patterns of human interaction and serves as a means of integration in social life. Therefore, it is important to examine the role of sports sociology in the lives of individuals and groups in order to obtain a broader understanding of its contribution to social development. Along with the development of the times, sport is no longer seen merely as an activity to maintain physical health, but also as a space for social interaction that brings together various layers of society. Phenomena such as the proliferation of sports communities, mass running events, or the emergence of new sports such as padel show that sport is able to become an inclusive forum that strengthens togetherness, solidarity, and group identity. At the individual level, sport plays a role in shaping character, improving mental health, and providing self-confidence. Meanwhile, at the group level, sport creates social cohesion, opens space for communication, and strengthens community integration. In other words, sport has a strategic social function in social life. Sport is not merely a physical activity for the purpose of health and recreation, but also a social activity that influences the psyche and lives of many people, both those directly involved and those not directly involved in sporting activities. Studies in sports sociology show how sporting activities have evolved along with societal development, becoming commercialized and turned into entertainment spectacles (Hidayati, 2021).

The Role of Sport at the Individual Level and the results of studies show that sport has a significant influence on the formation of individual identity and character. In a sociological perspective, sporting activities become a means of internalizing social values such as discipline, responsibility, hard work, and sportsmanship. Through interaction in sport, individuals learn to understand norms, roles, and social

expectations. Therefore, sports sociology is present as a field of study that does not only understand sport as a physical phenomenon, but also as a social phenomenon that has a broad impact on the process of character formation, especially for young people. Sports sociology views that sport can be a medium of socialization, internalization of values, and identity formation. Through participation in sporting activities, young people learn about discipline, teamwork, sportsmanship, responsibility, leadership, and the ability to face victory and defeat in an ethical manner (Rian Andriansyah et al., 2025).

The Role of Sport at the Group and Community Levels At the group level, sport plays a central role in creating social cohesion. Sporting activities, both recreational and competitive, strengthen solidarity and a sense of togetherness among community members. This is in line with Durkheim's structural functionalism theory, which views sport as an instrument to strengthen social integration through collective experiences. In multicultural societies such as Indonesia, sport also becomes a medium of national unity. For example, public enthusiasm for the achievements of the national football team creates a sense of collective identity that transcends ethnic and social class boundaries. Football is the most popular sport in the world that not only reflects physical activity and game strategy, but also illustrates social, cultural, and even political dynamics in society. In this context, football is not only a competition between teams, but also a complex space of social interaction between players, coaches, officials, and supporters (Zahrotunnisa Noviriyanti et al., 2025).

Sport not only functions as a physical activity, but also as a social phenomenon that reflects the values, norms, and structure of society. This article aims to analyze the role of sports sociology in social life, both at the individual and group levels. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a literature review as the main method. The results of the study show that sport plays an important role in the formation of social identity, group integration, and the reproduction of social values such as cooperation, discipline, and solidarity. However, sport can also reveal social inequality and power politics, especially in the context of commercialization and extreme nationalism. Thus, a sociological understanding of sport becomes crucial in building an inclusive and socially just society. The importance or purpose of this article is to explain how sociological methods can help shape human behavior by understanding the social, cultural, and historical influences on the formation of individual and group character in society through sport. Resolving sports-related problems is an effort to reach society, and this can only be done by sociology as one of the relevant disciplines. Sociology seeks to study humans from the perspective of relationships between individuals or groups so that change occurs, values and culture are created and utilized for the welfare of perpetrators of crime (Hasibuan et al., 2024).

Studies on sports sociology become relevant to understand how sporting activities influence social relations, shape patterns of interaction, and contribute to social development. Furthermore, this can provide a foundation for governments, educational institutions, and community organizations in designing sports programs that are not only health-promoting, but also strengthen social bonds. Explain the role of sports sociology in shaping individual character and improving physical and mental health. Analyze the function of sport as a means of social interaction that strengthens solidarity and group cohesion in society. Examine sport as a social phenomenon that influences identity, norms, and values in social life. Provide an understanding of the importance of sport as a social instrument that can be utilized for comprehensive community development.

RESEARCHMETHOD

This research method uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of understanding social phenomena occurring in society related to the role of sport at both the individual and group levels. The descriptive qualitative approach is employed to obtain an in-depth understanding of social meanings, values, and the impact of sport on social structures and societal dynamics. The type of research is a literature study conducted by collecting, reviewing, and analyzing various scientific sources such as books, national and international journals, previous research findings, and relevant electronic publications. Through this method, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of how sport functions as a social phenomenon that shapes values, identity, and solidarity in society.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Sports Sociology at the Individual Level

The results of the study indicate that sport has a significant influence on the formation of individual identity and character. Through participation in sporting activities, individuals learn to adapt to prevailing social norms, roles, and values. Sport becomes a space for socialization in which individuals internalize values such as discipline, responsibility, hard work, and sportsmanship (Rian Andriansyah et al., 2025). In addition, sport can shape one's identity and social personality. For example, an athlete involved in competition not only develops physical abilities but also trains emotional capacities such as self-control, respect for opponents, and the ability to accept defeat with sportsmanship. In this context, sports sociology views sport as a means of social character formation that plays an important role in the process of nonformal education (Hasibuan et al., 2024).

For the younger generation, involvement in sports activities also functions as a positive instrument of social control, as it is able to redirect negative behavior toward productive activities that build self-identity and social trust. Therefore, sport has a strategic role in shaping individuals who are not only physically healthy but also socially and emotionally mature. For instance, an athlete who participates in sports competitions not only hones physical skills but also develops emotional capabilities such as self-control, respect for opponents, and the ability to accept defeat with a sporting attitude. This phenomenon confirms that sport serves as an effective arena of nonformal education in shaping social character, strengthening positive social control, and helping redirect deviant behavior toward productive activities that foster social trust (Zahrotunnisa Noviriyanti et al., 2025). Thus, sport plays a strategic role as an instrument for forming individuals who are physically healthy as well as socially and emotionally mature.

Furthermore, sport also provides space for individuals to learn social roles and expectations embedded in society, strengthen leadership skills, and cultivate teamwork. This reflects that sport can serve as an effective medium of socialization in supporting the process of identity and character formation that is responsive to widely accepted social values.

No.	Research Findings	Description of Findings	Implications for Individuals	Source
1.	Sport as a process of social socialization	Through involvement in sport, individuals learn the norms, values, and social roles that apply in society.	Helps individuals understand social rules and adapt to the social environment.	Rian Andriansyah et al., 2025
2.	Character formation through sports activities	Sports activities instill values such as discipline, hard work, responsibility, and sportsmanship.	Encourages the development of positive character and resilient personality traits.	Valdy Alfrido Hasibuan et al., 2024
3.	Sport as a means of social control	Involvement in sports activities diverts negative behavior into productive activities.	Reduces deviant behavior and builds a positive social identity.	Rian Andriansyah et al., 2025
4.	Development of emotional and social skills	Individuals who are active in sports learn to control emotions, respect opponents, and accept defeat with sportsmanship.	Enhances emotional intelligence and social interaction skills.	Valdy Alfrido Hasibuan et al., 2024

5.	Strengthening cooperation and leadership	Team sports activities train the ability to cooperate and take on leadership roles.	Forms individuals who are able to lead, collaborate, and adapt to the social environment.	Valdy Alfrido Hasibuan et al. ,2024
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The Role of Sports Sociology at the Group and Community Levels

At the group level, sport functions as a means of social cohesion and integration among members of society. Sporting activities, both at the community and national levels, serve as spaces for interaction that strengthen social solidarity. This is in line with Durkheim's structural functionalism theory, which views collective activities such as sport as forms of shared experiences that foster a sense of togetherness and social attachment (Sondarika, 2022). In Indonesia, this phenomenon is clearly visible in various activities such as fun runs, community cycling, and the massive public support for the national football team. Community participation in these activities demonstrates that sport functions as a unifying force that transcends ethnic, religious, and social class boundaries (Hidayati, 2021).

Furthermore, in the context of modern sociology, the emergence of trends such as padel and urban community sports illustrates how sport has evolved as a medium of social interaction and group identity formation. Sport is no longer merely a physical activity, but part of a social lifestyle that strengthens relationships among community members, expands social networks, and reinforces solidarity among younger generations. Thus, sport plays a dual role: as a means of social integration and as a space for social expression in modern society (Munandar, 2023). In multicultural societies such as Indonesia, sport becomes a highly effective unifying instrument. For example, widespread public support for the national football team is not merely a form of entertainment, but also a symbol of collective identity that transcends ethnic, religious, and social class boundaries. Such activities respond to the social need for shared identification that strengthens national spirit and unity (Athalarik, 2020).

In addition, the development of new sports trends such as padel among urban youth indicates the evolution of sport as a medium of social expression and community identity formation. Sport has now become not only a physical activity, but also an integral part of social lifestyle that helps expand social networks, strengthen group solidarity, and reinforce social bonds across generations. This phenomenon highlights sports sociology as a dynamic and relevant field of study in understanding contemporary social transformation (Sahrungi et al., 2024).

No.	Research Findings	Description of Findings	Implications for Groups / Society	Source
1.	Sport as a means of social cohesion	Sports activities create interactions that strengthen solidarity among community members.	Enhances togetherness, reduces conflict, and strengthens social relationships.	Zahrotunnisa Noviriyanti et al., 2025

2.	Social integration through collective activities	Sport is regarded as a collective experience that fosters social attachment from Durkheim's functionalist perspective.	Helps communities feel part of a larger group and nurtures social solidarity.	Zahrotunnisa Noviriyanti et al., 2025
3.	Sport as a unifying force in multicultural societies	Activities such as fun runs, community cycling, and support for national teams unite society regardless of ethnicity and religion.	Strengthens national identity, reduces social barriers, and builds a spirit of unity.	Hidayati, 2021
4.	Sport as a modern social lifestyle	New sports trends such as padel and urban communities serve as media for social interaction and group identity formation.	Expands social networks, creates new communities, and strengthens solidarity among younger generations.	Zahrotunnisa Noviriyanti et al., 2025
5.	Sport as a medium of social expression	Sport is not only a physical activity but also a symbol of lifestyle and group identity expression.	Shapes collective identity, strengthens community culture, and increases social participation.	Hidayati, 2021

Sport as a Means of Reproducing Social Values

Sports sociology also explains how sport plays a role in the reproduction of social and cultural values. Values such as cooperation, healthy competition, and solidarity are continuously reproduced through sporting practices in society. However, on the other hand, sport can also reveal social inequality and power relations, particularly in the context of commercialization and achievement-oriented politics (Hasibuan et al., 2024). From Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical perspective, sport constitutes a social field laden with symbols, economic capital, and cultural capital. For example, access to high-quality sports facilities is often limited to certain social classes, thereby reinforcing social stratification. In this context, sport can function as a means of reproducing social inequality rather than merely as a tool for integration (Richard et al., 2023).

Therefore, it is important to examine sport through a critical sociological lens in order to understand the power relations embedded within it. Nevertheless, sport also possesses transformative potential when directed toward inclusive social goals. Community-based sports programs can serve as instruments of social empowerment and improvement in quality of life, particularly for marginalized groups. This approach aligns with the view that sport can function as an instrument of social and moral development within society (Veken et al., 2020).

No.	Research Findings	Description of Findings	Social Implications	Source
1.	Sport reproduces positive social values	Sporting practices instill values of cooperation,	Builds a productive social culture and	Valdy Alfirido Hasibuan et al.,

		solidarity, and healthy competition that are continuously transmitted across generations.	strengthens relationships within society.	2024
2.	Social inequality in access to sport	High-quality sports facilities are often accessible only to certain social classes.	Reinforces social stratification and creates unequal opportunities.	Valdy Alfirido Hasibuan et al., 2024
3.	Sport as an arena of power (field)	According to Bourdieu, sport is a social space that contains economic, cultural, and symbolic capital.	Reveals relations of domination, status competition, and class-based reproduction of social values.	Bourdieu's theoretical perspective
4.	Influence of commercialization and achievement-oriented politics	Sport at the professional level is often influenced by economic and political interests.	Generates social pressure, power imbalances, and the commercialization of sporting values.	Valdy Alfirido Hasibuan et al., 2024
5.	Sport as a means of reproducing inequality	The distribution of facilities, access, and opportunities in sport is uneven within society.	Strengthens differences in social capital between groups and maintains social hierarchies.	Bourdieu's perspective

Social Dynamics and Contemporary Challenges

The development of the times shows that sport has now become part of popular culture embedded in the lifestyle of urban society. The emergence of new sports trends such as padel, community yoga, and fun sport events indicates a paradigm shift in which sport is now understood as a means of social recreation and identity expression (Qomara et al., 2024). On the one hand, this phenomenon expands social participation and builds cross-group solidarity. On the other hand, the commercialization of sport also generates new challenges in the form of unequal access, gender bias, and the marginalization of smaller communities (Khudzaifah et al., 2022). Therefore, a sociological understanding of sport needs to highlight issues of social justice, equitable distribution of facilities, and the importance of character education in sporting activities. Thus, this discussion demonstrates that the role of sports sociology in social life is very broad, ranging from the formation of individuals with strong character to the strengthening of social solidarity within groups. Sport not only brings people together in competition, but also in shared human values, togetherness, and collective spirit to achieve common social goals (Vajic, 2024).

However, the process of sport commercialization also creates challenges such as unequal access to sports facilities, gender bias, and the marginalization of minority groups (Foekh et al., 2024). Therefore, a sociological understanding of sport must be able to examine aspects of social justice, equitable facility distribution, and the importance of comprehensive character education so that sport truly functions as an instrument of inclusive and equitable social development (Sapitri et al., 2024). This discussion underlines the importance of a sociological approach in interpreting sport as a complex social phenomenon involving individual character formation, the strengthening of social solidarity, and its role in both the reproduction and transformation of social structures. With this in-depth understanding, sports management and policy can be designed to generate broader positive impacts on social development.

No.	Research Findings	Description of Findings	Contemporary Social Implications	Source
1.	Sport as part of urban	Sport has become part	Increases social	Hidayati, 2021

	popular culture	of the urban lifestyle through trends such as padel, community yoga, and fun sport events.	participation, builds solidarity, and expands spaces for interaction.	
2.	Paradigm shift of sport as a means of social recreation	Sport is no longer understood solely as a physical activity, but also as a form of identity expression and social entertainment.	Shapes new social identities, strengthens community cohesion, and fosters public engagement.	Hidayati, 2021
3.	Commercialization of sport as a social challenge	The sports industry creates unequal access to facilities, gender bias, and the marginalization of smaller groups.	Widens social inequality and hinders justice and equal participation opportunities.	Contemporary sociological analysis
4.	Inequality in access to sports facilities	Access to quality sports facilities is uneven across social groups, genders, and regions.	Increases social stratification and obstructs equitable community development.	Contemporary sociological analysis
5.	The role of sports sociology in assessing social justice	Sports sociology emphasizes the importance of equitable and inclusive access to facilities.	Provides a foundation for public policy so that sport becomes a fair development instrument.	Hidayati, 2021

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the literature review and the discussion on the role of sports sociology, it can be concluded that sport has a significant social role in society, both at the individual and group levels. At the individual level, sport helps build character, facilitates the learning of social values, and shapes personal identity. At the group level, sport teaches individuals discipline, sportsmanship, cooperation, and responsibility. Sport has the capacity to strengthen cohesion among community members at both the group and societal levels. Sport, whether formal or recreational, enhances solidarity, togetherness, and collective identity through interaction. Sport is able to unite diverse groups from different backgrounds, as demonstrated by the phenomenon of support for national teams and the growth of community-based sports trends. Sport becomes a symbol of unity in multicultural settings such as Indonesia and also helps strengthen intergenerational relationships.

However, there are important aspects that must be considered in sport. From a sociological perspective, there is the possibility that sport reproduces social inequality, particularly in terms of power relations, commercialization, and access to facilities. According to Bourdieu's theory, sport is a field influenced by economic, cultural, and symbolic capital, and if it is not managed inclusively, it can reinforce social stratification. Sports sociology analysis must take into account contemporary issues such as commercialization, gender bias, and the marginalization of minority groups. Therefore, a sociological understanding of sport should not only consider its integrative aspects but also examine the structural injustices that arise as a result of sport. Sport has the potential to transform society by serving as a tool for community empowerment and improving quality of life. In order for sport to truly build character, strengthen social solidarity, and create a more harmonious society, inclusive, equitable, and just sports policies are required.

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