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

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Abstract

Tarung Derajat is an indigenous Indonesian martial art that emphasizes physical strength, discipline, and character building. Although its development shows progress in terms of training and achievements, women's participation in this sport is still relatively low due to the influence of gender stereotypes and social norms that associate contact martial arts with masculinity. This study aims to describe the public perceptions of Tarung Derajat, perceptions of women's participation, as well as the role of social factors and media in shaping public acceptance. The research uses a descriptive quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey through an online Likert-scale questionnaire. The results indicate that public perception of Tarung Derajat falls into the good category, especially regarding the values of sportsmanship, discipline, and character building, but the perception of women's participation is still lower, reflecting the influence of traditional social and cultural constructs. Social factors and the media have been proven to play an important role in shaping the level of public acceptance, thus it is necessary to have more inclusive and gender-equitable women's participation in Tarung Derajat.

Keywords: *Martial Arts, Tarung Derajat, Women, Perception, Semarang City*

INTRODUCTION

In the world of martial arts, the sport of Tarung Derajat has developed into a sport that emphasizes aspects of discipline, responsibility, and etiquette. Tarung Derajat was originally developed by Achmad Drajat, known as Aa Boxer(Azhari, Fajriudin, & Mardiana, 2018). Tarung Derajat is a traditional Indonesian martial arts sport founded in Bandung, West Java, which integrates martial arts skills through muscle strength, intelligence, and moral values in a logical and realistic manner (Hanifah & Setiawan, 2015).

This physical contact sport integrates five main physical abilities, namely strength, speed, accuracy, courage, and perseverance (Setiawan, 2021), which are manifested through four basic movement elements in the form of punches, kicks, blocks, and throws (Noviatmoko, 2016). Technically, Tarung Derajat has several basic techniques that serve

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as the foundation for training and practice. These techniques include stance techniques, guard techniques, punching techniques, and kicking techniques.

Stance techniques include the salute, sitting position, basic ready-standing position, facing left and right, forward and backward steps, as well as resting or dismissing positions. Guard techniques consist of the stationary guard, cross guard, and fighting guard, which function as preparedness in facing an opponent. In addition, punching techniques include various variations, such as straight punches, flick punches, snapping punches, circular punches, fast punches, and elbow strikes. Kicking techniques include straight kicks, inner and outer circular kicks, back circular kicks, front and back hook kicks, as well as side and back kicks(Hasibuan, Ahmad, & Riduan, 2019).

Tarung Derajat is a martial art that demands high physical and mental readiness from its athletes. In addition to emphasizing strength, speed, and endurance, this sport also reflects the cultural, ethical, and philosophical values typical of traditional Indonesian martial arts. It embodies values of sportsmanship, resilience, self-control, and a realistic approach to maintaining safety and respecting individual rights in social interactions (Chairad, 2017). The aspects developed in Tarung Derajat are not limited to technical and physical skills but also include character building and etiquette.

These values serve as the foundation for the development strategy of Tarung Derajat, which is aimed not only at achieving physical accomplishments but also at fostering strong and cultured character. Therefore, Tarung Derajat can be understood as a sport that integrates physical, mental, and social dimensions in a balanced manner throughout its training process (Elda & Setiawan, 2025).

Although Tarung Derajat continues to show development and improve achievements, women's participation in it still faces a gender gap. The low participation of women in contact sports is not only occurring in Indonesia but also globally, influenced by a patriarchal cultural construct that views martial arts as a masculine domain. Fadhilla Zaen (2021) found that in the context of the Taekwondo UKM at UIN Yogyakarta, women are often perceived as not fitting the character of martial arts. Similarly, Bashor Muhaji (2020) His research at Kodim Klaten revealed negative societal views towards women's Tarung Derajat athletes, who are considered tomboyish and less feminine, even though they are capable of showing commendable achievements.

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Various studies show that social stereotypes linking contact sport with masculinity still pose a major barrier to women's participation. Women's involvement in physical contact sport is often perceived as inconsistent with traditional gender norms and feminine image (Br. Pinem & Rosramadhana, 2023). In line with this, Yushan He et al (2024) found that awareness of traditional gender roles also shapes biases and stereotypes that limit women's involvement in sports perceived as masculine. These stereotypes ultimately reinforce social restrictions and hinder women's participation in physical contact sports.

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

This phenomenon can also be seen in the context of Semarang City, where the family, school, and community environments have a significant influence on women's decisions to engage in martial arts such as Tarung Derajat. Parents' concerns about changes in character and the loss of a feminine image indicate that gender limitations in social perception are still strong. Based on the author's personal experience as a woman who grew up in Semarang, social pressure and rejection from family serve as a real depiction that the narrative limiting women's participation in contact sports is still persistent and can affect women's involvement in them.

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

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values instilled through martial arts actually become a means to confront and challenge the cultural pressures of patriarchy that limit women's participation.

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

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

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

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METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with descriptive methods and a cross-sectional survey design because it is most suitable for depicting public perceptions of the martial art Tarung Derajat, perception of women's participation, as well as the role of social factors and media in shaping such acceptance. A quantitative approach was chosen because public perceptions can be operationalized into measurable indicators expressed in numerical scores using a Likert scale.

The descriptive method is used because this study does not aim to test cause-and-effect relationships or provide specific treatments to respondents, but rather to describe the actual conditions that develop in society. This study focuses on portraying trends in perception, level of acceptance, and variations in public views regarding female involvement in the martial art Tarung Derajat.

The cross-sectional survey design is considered relevant because it allows data collection at a specific point in time without manipulating variables, thereby representing the actual perceptions of the public at the time the research is conducted. The use of online closed-ended questionnaires supports data collection efficiency, maintains consistecy in measurement, and facilitates the process of processing and analyzing data accurately and in a structured manner.

The sampling technique in this study used purposive sampling, which is the selection of respondents based on certain criteria relevant to the research objectives. The respondent criteria include people residing in Semarang City, aged 17-55 years, both male and female. The sample size was determined using the Lemeshow formula because the total population of people meeting the criteria is not precisely known, with a 95% confidence level ($\alpha = 0.05$), the minimum number of respondents obtained was 384, which was then rounded up to 385 respondents to increase the accuracy of the estimation, this number considered representative to describe public perceptions regarding women's participation in Tarung Derajat sports in Semarang City.

The research variables are descriptive in nature and are used to describe the phenomena being studied, including public perception of Tarung Derajat, public perception of female participation in Tarung Derajat, as well as the social and media influences on female participation. Data collection was conducted through closed-ended questionnaires based on Google Forms, distributed online via social media, with measurement using a five-point Likert scale.

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RESULT

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

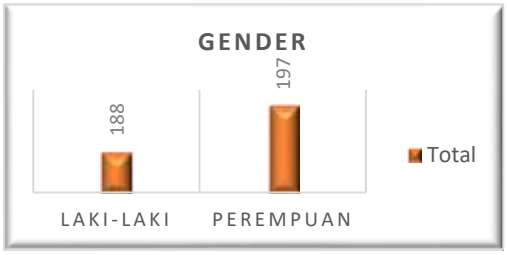

Figure 1. Gender Characteristics

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

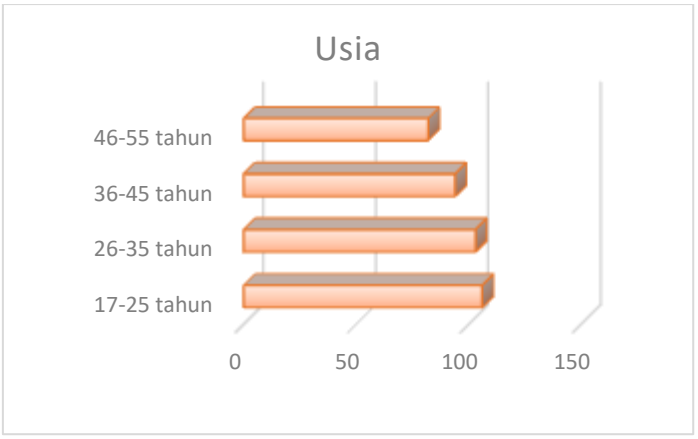

Figure 2. Age Characteristics

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

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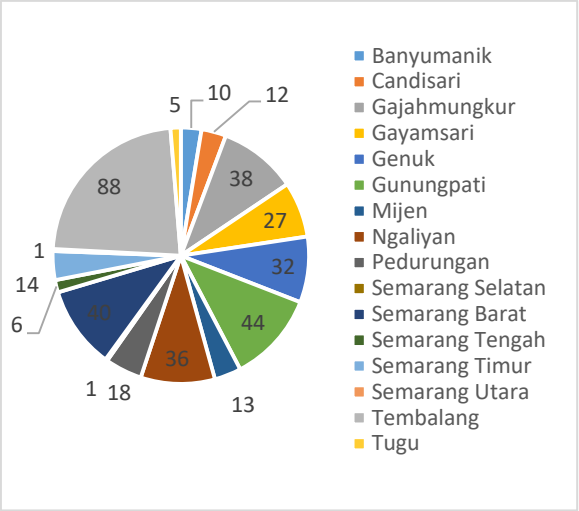

Figure 3. Residency Characteristics

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

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

Table 1. Descriptive Statistic od Variables

Variable	*N*	*Range Statistic*	*Minimum*	*Maximum*	*Mean*	*Std. Dev*
P1	385	20	5	25	18.15	5.372
P2	385	15	10	25	17.52	5.053
PE	385	20	5	25	18.68	5.651

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

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

The social and media factor variables (P3) have a minimum value of 5, a maximum of 25, and a range of 20. Measured through 5 Likert scale items, the average values obtained are 18.68 with a standard deviation of 5.651, indicating a relatively even data distribution. The average per item of 3.74 falls into the good category, so it can be concluded that social and media factors play a fairly strong role in shaping public perception of women's participation in Tarung Derajat sports.

DISCUSSION

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

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

The analysis results show that public perception of women's participation in Tarung Derajat is fairly positive, although still lower compared to the public's perception of Tarung Derajat in general. This suggests a shift toward the acceptance of women in martial arts, yet some members of society still view Tarung Derajat as more suitable for men due to the physical demands and the courage required.

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

CONCLUSION

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

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

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