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Gender Discrimination in the Visual Representation of Athletes on the Official Instagram Accounts of Sports Federations in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses gender discrimination in the visual representation of athletes on the official Instagram accounts of three national sports federations in Indonesia: the Indonesian Football Association (PSSI), the Indonesian Volleyball Association (PBVSI), and the Indonesian Badminton Association (PBSI). Using quantitative content analysis of 1,025 visuals from 624 posts during the period June 2024–June 2025, this study traces patterns of gender-based representation through the categories of visual framing, activity context, and caption tone. Judith Butler's theoretical framework on gender performativity was used to interpret how visual representations act as symbolic practices that reproduce constructions of masculinity and femininity in the digital sports sphere. The results show that 70.4% of visuals feature male athletes, with a predominance of competitive framing and achievement-based narratives. In contrast, female athletes are more often depicted in static poses, close-ups, and noncompetitive contexts that emphasize personal and emotional aspects. This pattern shows that sports federation social media not only represents the reality of sports, but also reinforces discursive structures that normalize gender differences. Thus, the federation's Instagram acts as a performative arena where gender identities are constructed and repeated through visual representation practices that appear neutral but are ideological.

Introduction

The rapid development of social media, particularly Instagram, has changed the pattern of sports communication globally and enabled sports federations and athletes to construct visual narratives that influence the way the public views athletes' achievements, identities, and images (Bahir et al., 2023; Nölleke & Birkner, 2019). In Indonesia, where sport is an integral part of national identity, the visual representation of athletes on social media not only reflects individual success but also represents the collective values of the nation (Rosyidah & Nurwati, 2019). However, various studies show that social media has the potential to reinforce long-standing gender

biases, especially in the portrayal of female athletes (López-Carril et al., 2024; Wilson & Mcneilly, 2013). Female athletes are often faced with narratives that emphasize esthetics, personality, or emotional aspects rather than their competitive abilities. *Close-up* visuals highlighting the face or formal poses emphasizing appearance often dominate (Kang et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2020). This contrasts with male athletes, who are more often depicted in the context of action or competition (Dunn et al., 2024; Prasetya & Chow, 2023). Such biased representation not only affects public perceptions of female athletes' competence but also impacts their professional legitimacy, sponsorship opportunities, and media exposure, which should be equal (Cooky et al., 2021; Sherwood et al., 2020).

The phenomenon of gender bias in sports media reinforces the framing theory argument that the media not only conveys information but also actively constructs social reality and maintains certain symbolic hierarchies (Paul et al., 2023). In the Indonesian context, social media has become the main channel for distributing sports content, particularly through official federation accounts. However, systematic and quantitative studies examining patterns of visual representation on official national sports federation accounts are still very limited. In fact, sports federations have significant symbolic and institutional authority, so the visual narratives they construct have a major impact on shaping public perception (Rosyidah & Nurwati, 2019). This phenomenon shows how visual representations can be biased, with social media becoming an instrument *of disciplinary power* (Braun et al., 2017), directing athletes' bodies to conform to hegemonic gender norms. In the Indonesian context, national sports federations such as PSSI, PBVSI, and PBSI hold symbolic authority in shaping the national narrative about sports and national pride. Studies on gender bias in the representation of athletes on social media are important because platforms such as Instagram play a role in shaping collective awareness about who is considered 'athletic,' 'worth seeing,' and 'worthy of celebration.' Within the Butlerian framework, the act of posting images of athletes is not only a form of visual communication, but also *an iterative act* that continuously reinforces or challenges existing gender discourse (Evans et al., 2014). Therefore, a quantitative analysis of visual representation patterns on the official accounts of Indonesia's national sports federations can reveal to what extent *gender performativity* is reproduced within a digital ecosystem that appears neutral yet is saturated with ideological values.

In addition to having implications at the national level, gender representation inequality also has a global impact. The International Olympic Committee (IOC), through various gender equality policies, encourages sports federations around the world to eliminate representation inequality and strengthen narratives that support equality (Banerjee & Manna, 2020; Santana & Oliveira, 2022). Therefore, studies that critically explore gender visual representation in the official accounts of Indonesian sports federations are not only relevant to the national context but also support the global movement for gender equality in sports. In the context of media coverage of athletes, Goffman's framing theory and Hall's representation theory highlight that the media does not merely reflect reality but also plays a role in constructing social meaning (Nopiyanto & Permadi, 2023). This clearly affects the perceived legitimacy of female athletes in society (Mustopa et al., 2023). This negative representation always has the potential to reduce the visibility of female athletes' achievements and reinforce

social stereotypes that place men as the standard of athletic excellence (Minikel-Lacocque, 2020). Content often associated with beauty and emotional vulnerability has the potential to conflict with the competitive image that female athletes should receive as athletes (Xue et al., 2019). This study also uses gender performativity theory as a lens to examine the visual representation of athletes in social media. By analyzing gender distribution, activity context, visual framing, and caption tone on the official accounts of PSSI, PBVSI, and PBSI over a year, this study seeks to identify forms *of gendered performance* that subtly maintain the symbolic hierarchy between men and women. The results of this study are expected to not only provide an empirical mapping of visual representation bias, but also offer a critical reading of how the bodies of Indonesian athletes are constructed in the digital space through performative mechanisms that shape public perceptions of gender, achievement, and sports nationalism.

Sports organizations and individuals need to be aware of and manage the narratives they construct on social media to be inclusive and balanced, and to reduce the influence of these negative stereotypes (Grabmüllerová, 2022), the media not only reflects reality, but also plays a role in constructing social meaning (Sherwood et al., 2020). A critical approach is needed in the creation and consumption of content on social media so that the narratives produced do not focus solely on physical attributes or traditional roles, but also include the achievements and overall excellence of athletes (Bissell et al., 2024; Navarro & Coromina, 2020). Through greater awareness and management of positive narratives, social media can contribute to building fairer representations of female athletes and reducing the reinforcement of harmful stereotypes.

Although there have been various studies examining gender representation in conventional sports media and athletes' personal accounts, quantitative research that systematically analyses the official Instagram accounts of Indonesia's national sports federations is still rare. Previous studies tend not to present in-depth analyses that comprehensively combine visual distribution, visual framing, activity context, and caption tone. Thus, this study aims to fill this gap through a comprehensive quantitative approach that maps gender representation in three major national sports federations in Indonesia, namely PSSI (football), PBVSI (volleyball), and PBSI (badminton) during a full competition season. This study not only maps the proportion of visual distribution of male and female athletes, but also analyses the context of activities (competitive action, training, formal poses), framing types (*close-up, mid-shot, wide-shot*), and *caption* tone (performance-oriented, personal, humorous), thereby providing a more complete picture of the construction of gender representation on social media. Thus, this study aims to examine the potential for gender discrimination in the visual representation of athletes on the official Instagram accounts of national sports federations in Indonesia. Butler asserts that power works through mechanisms of representation that appear natural but are in fact regulatory (Butler, 1999). In the context of sports, male athletes' bodies are often associated with strength, aggressiveness, and competition, while female athletes' bodies are constructed through images of softness, beauty, and emotion (Sheherazade et al., 2022). This process is a form of *regulatory practice* that stabilizes the masculine-feminine opposition, making 'femininity' an effect of a subjugating visual structure. In increasingly aesthetic digital spaces such as Instagram, the algorithmic logic that emphasizes 'attractive' visuals reinforces this

gender performativity, where women tend to be portrayed through static poses, *close-ups,* or emotional expressions, while men are portrayed through dynamic actions and competitive victories.

The results of this study are expected to provide significant empirical contributions to sports federations in developing more equitable and inclusive visual editorial policies. Furthermore, this research supports Indonesia's contribution to the global effort to promote gender equality in sport. These steps are in line with the broader global movement advocating for gender equality in sport, such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Gender Equality Review Project launched in 2017, which is a key step in advancing gender equality within the Olympic Movement. This project was initiated by the Women in Sport Commission and the Athletes' Commission, and in 2018, it was approved by the IOC Executive Board (Santana & Oliveira, 2022).

Literature review

Gender representation in sports media

Gender representation has long played a significant role in how sports audiences perceive and evaluate athletes, influencing broader social attitudes toward gender norms and roles (Cooky et al., 2021). This is particularly evident in the context of sports media, which not only reports on athletic performance but also actively constructs cultural narratives that reinforce or challenge traditional gender stereotypes (Sherwood et al., 2020). Several studies have shown that male athletes are often portrayed as strong, competitive, and performance-focused, while female athletes are frequently depicted through a lens that emphasizes esthetics, emotional vulnerability, or personal life outside the field (Kane et al., 2013). Scientific literature consistently highlights this disparity across various media platforms. For example, content analysis of Olympic coverage revealed that female athletes received less coverage overall and were more often portrayed in passive or non-action contexts compared to male athletes, reinforcing perceptions of female athletic inferiority (Fernández & Muñoz, 2021). Furthermore, female athletes are often depicted in relation to their physical appearance or family roles rather than their competitive achievements (Raghubanshi & Bhati, 2023; Suárez et al., 2020). Such patterns of representation can reduce public support for women's sports, limit sponsorship opportunities, and discourage young women from participating in athletics (Cooky et al., 2021). Visual representation in sports media is not merely a reflection of reality but a performative arena where gender identities are continually produced, negotiated, and legitimized through visual language. Referring to Judith Butler's ideas, gender is not understood as an essential identity attached to the biological body, but as the result of a series of repetitive actions that form the illusion of stable male and female identities (Butler, 1999; Jarrett, 2015). In the context of sports social media, every image, caption, and pose of an athlete functions as *a performance* that reproduces or challenges dominant gender norms. Thus, visual media on platforms like Instagram become spaces where 'gender' is not only displayed but also performed (Butler, 1993, 1999).

Social media and visual framing

While traditional broadcast and print media have been the focus of much research, attention has recently shifted to social media, where visual content plays a central role in shaping athletes' narratives. Social media platforms, particularly Instagram, prioritize image-based storytelling, providing sports federations and athletes with new opportunities to engage audiences directly. However, these platforms can also perpetuate or even intensify gender bias due to their emphasis on visual esthetics and personal branding (Hayes et al., 2021; Kavasoğlu & Koca, 2022; Smith et al., 2021). The lack of attention to female content in sports news on social media implies that women remain marginalized in the larger narrative of sporting achievement (Cooky et al., 2021). Social media has become a platform where athletes, especially women, can introduce themselves and challenge traditional views on gender roles (Santia et al., 2024). However, although social media has the potential to provide space for more equitable representation, the acquisition and presentation of information from official federation accounts often reflects existing gender bias. In this context, captions, photo angles, and narrative choices on an official sports federation social media account accessed by the public can function as *a discursive apparatus,* a discourse tool that produces the subjects of 'male athletes' and 'female athletes' with unequal social positions. For example, when the achievements of female athletes are only recognized when accompanied by narratives of gentle personalities or personal sacrifice, such representations limit the possibility for women to appear as autonomous, competitive subjects. This process creates a 'gender reality' that appears natural even though it is constructed through *the repetition of signs,* the repetition of social signs that produce the effect of reality. Official sports federation media reinforces gender inequality by presenting content that ignores the achievements of female athletes and more often focuses on aesthetic aspects that emphasize feminine roles (Shafarenko & Volobuieva, 2021). Butler argues that social systems and media have productive power in shaping gender subjects through language and visuality.

Gender discrimination in Indonesian sports

In the context of sports media in Indonesia, cultural norms related to femininity and masculinity influence how athletes are portrayed and perceived by the public. Research shows that the media often adopts traditional gender expectations, where male athletes are often portrayed as symbols of strength and national pride, while female athletes are more often depicted in the context of beauty, weakness, and personal sacrifice (Nurjaya et al., 2020; Prastya et al., 2022). This indicates a persistent imbalance in representation in Indonesian sports media, creating biases that not only influence how athletes are viewed by society but also how female athletes perceive themselves within the sporting context. It is important to note that gender representation in sport is inseparable from existing social constructs. The media plays a major role in shaping public opinion on gender, with many media reports creating a narrative that female athletes can only be successful if they meet certain beauty standards. This encourages women to pay more attention to their appearance than their own sporting achievements. (Burroughs et al., 2022).

Furthermore, research shows that sports media in Indonesia tends to prioritize male athletes in terms of achievements, while female athletes are often overlooked, creating a gap in recognition of their contributions to the world of sports (Paul et al., 2023; Pedersen, 2002). Female athletes rarely receive equal exposure compared to their male counterparts, which impacts public perceptions of their abilities and success in sports (Allain & Dotto, 2024; Fernández & Muñoz, 2021). In the context of women in Indonesian sports, there is also the perception that female athletes' participation is more related to social factors, such as building friendships and maintaining health, rather than competition and achievement (Drole et al., 2023).

Instagram as a tool for representation

Instagram, as a social media platform, has the ability to introduce and reinforce deep patterns of visual representation (Miller et al., 2015). Instagram tends to pay more attention to visual and aesthetic aspects than other social media platforms, which makes it very powerful in shaping the public identity of athletes (Intezar, 2021). For sports federations, Instagram is a tool for promoting their athletes using images and videos that are quick to view and easy to understand (Romney & Johnson, 2020). However, these visual representations often focus more on attention-grabbing images, such as poses that show off the athletes' bodies or clothing, rather than highlighting their sporting achievements or skills (Romney & Johnson, 2020). Instagram's emphasis on visual content aligns with contemporary media consumption patterns, where users are drawn to images and video clips that evoke immediate emotional impact (Kavasoğlu & Koca, 2022).

Engagement with visual esthetics can obscure textual narratives, limiting the scope of representation to superficial aspects. This tendency is particularly evident in the context of athletic promotion, where images often focus on athletes' physiques, fashion choices, or staged poses, rather than their technical abilities or competitive achievements (Kearns et al., 2023). Studies analyzing Instagram posts by sports organizations have found that male athletes are more often depicted in active images related to performance, while female athletes are portrayed in ways that highlight femininity, beauty, and lifestyle (Toffoletti & Thorpe, 2018; Verrastro et al., 2020). Research examining ESPN's Instagram accounts shows that content related to female athletes often reinforces traditional gender norms, even on sub-accounts intended to support women's sports (Gönkek et al., 2022). A similar pattern was identified in a global analysis, where posts featuring female athletes focused more on non-sporting aspects, potentially undermining the athletes' professional credibility (Kane et al., 2013). The relationship between visual representation and identity formation is strongly emphasized by social identity theory, which states that individuals derive part of their self-concept from their perception of membership in social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 2004; Woods et al., 2025). Athletes, through their presence on social media, negotiate their identities as both competitors and public figures. However, the dominant visual communication mechanisms on Instagram can skew this identity toward sensationalism rather than substance.

Instagram accounts of national sports federations in Indonesia

In Indonesia, official Instagram accounts play an important role for national sports federations, particularly PSSI (Indonesian Football Association), PBVSI (Indonesian Volleyball Association), and PBSI (Indonesian Badminton Association). These accounts serve as the primary means of promoting sports, interacting with fans, and disseminating relevant information about their respective disciplines.

PSSI, as the official governing body of football in Indonesia, utilizes the Instagram platform to increase public engagement and build a community among football fans. By leveraging engaging visual content, they connect with their audience, effectively showcasing match highlights, player profiles, and event promotions. Similarly, PBVSI serves the volleyball community by providing updates on championships, player performances, and training camps. This use of Instagram contributes to the visibility of these sports in the country and aligns with strategies that increase user interaction. Research shows that implementing effective social media strategies helps build a loyal follower base and maintain ongoing interactions that strengthen fan loyalty (Susanti, 2023). PBSI, the national badminton federation, operates its Instagram account to highlight player achievements, share training insights, and promote upcoming tournaments. As badminton plays an important role in Indonesian sports culture, the PBSI account helps generate enthusiasm and anticipation among fans. Research indicates that engaging content on Instagram can attract a larger audience and enhance brand advocacy within the sports community (Herman et al., 2024).

They use content tailored to their audience, thereby fostering a participatory culture among fans and players. This engagement is crucial for maintaining relevance and building a strong identity amid fierce competition in the sports world (Sokowati & Manda, 2022). Additionally, the interaction between sports organizations and their followers on Instagram illustrates the platform's role as a collaborative space where fans contribute to the sports narrative (Iglesias-Sánchez et al., 2020). Engagement metrics, such as likes and comments, serve as important indicators of the effectiveness of this strategy (Lausiry & Akmal, 2023).

Framing theory

Framing theory, conceptualized by Erving Goffman in 1974 as part of his work 'Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience,' serves as a critical analytical tool for understanding how media and visual communication shape perceptions of events and social realities. Goffman proposed that framing determines how individuals interpret experiences and narratives, including the role of media in constructing public discourse. Consequently, the selective presentation of facts in the media, from problem definition to moral judgment, highlights its power to influence public views and responses (Miskolci, 2023). In visual communication, framing goes beyond textual analysis to include the strategic selection of images, angles, and compositions that influence audience interpretations of athletes and sports narratives. Visual elements such as the choice between *close-ups* and *wide shots,* context (e.g., competition versus posed images), and accompanying captions significantly contribute to the framing of

identities and roles. These visual framing techniques can reinforce existing stereotypes, amplify certain narratives, and overlook others in public discourse (Chaney, 2022; Flusberg et al., 2024). Visual framing is essential in constructing narratives that determine which groups and identities are more visible or valued in the public sphere (Kautsar & Wahyunengsih, 2023).

In the representation of gender in sports media, framing theory explains the different portrayals of male and female athletes. Research shows that media coverage of female athletes often emphasizes their personal lives or aesthetic appeal, while male athletes are portrayed in contexts that emphasize strength and athletic skill (Alikor, 2023; Handayani & Costa, 2021). This imbalance in framing reflects and reinforces existing gender hierarchies in society. The strategic selection of images in action photos with portraits that have a purpose, as well as the framing of narratives through captions, can reveal institutional bias and influence public perceptions of gender equality in sport (Røhnebæk et al., 2024; Tam et al., 2021). The framing choices made by federations on Instagram have significant implications for the visibility and sponsorship opportunities of female athletes; such practices can either hinder or encourage discussions about gender equality in sports narratives (Sulehry & Wallace, 2021). The framing framework reveals that sports federation authorities have the power to determine which narratives are emphasized, contributing to fairer representation for athletes of various genders or perpetuating existing inequalities in sports culture (Ohl et al., 2024) (Arvidsson & Sabelfeld, 2023). Therefore, framing theory does not only focus on textual elements but also opens the way for interpretations related to visual practices and their critical role in shaping public perception.

Research questions

Based on framing theory and previous academic studies on gender representation in sports media, the following research questions and hypotheses will be tested in this study:

RQ1: What is the quantitative distribution of posts featuring male and female athletes on the official Instagram accounts of PSSI, PBVSI, and PBSI during the period June 2024—June 2025?

RQ2: Are there differences in the patterns of visual framing (types of shots and camera angles) used to depict male versus female athletes?

RQ3: How does the representation of activities (competitive actions, training, formal poses) differ between posts featuring male and female athletes?

RQ4: Does the tone of the text (performance-oriented, personal, humorous) differ significantly between posts featuring male and female athletes?

RQ5: To what extent do sports disciplines (football, volleyball, badminton) moderate the gender representation differences identified in RQ1–RQ4?

Methods

This study uses a quantitative content analysis approach to explore the potential for discrimination between male and female athletes in visual representations on the official Instagram accounts of national sports federations in Indonesia. Quantitative content

analysis was chosen because it allows researchers to objectively and measurably identify patterns of systematic representation in large amounts of visual data (Hartley, 2003), to investigate gender-based visual representations of athletes on Instagram, specifically in the context of three official Instagram accounts of national sports federations in Indonesia: PSSI, PBVSI, and PBSI. This method is particularly suitable as it allows researchers to systematically compare and identify patterns in broad visual representations (Johnson et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2020). Butler's framework is used not to alter the quantitative nature of this research, but to provide interpretative direction in the categorization and analysis of findings. The codes used in content analysis (e.g., type of activity, facial expression, caption narrative, and visual framing) are derived from the theoretical understanding that each visual element is a performative act that shapes public perceptions of masculinity and femininity (Jule, 2018; Heldman & Rebecca, 2025). In other words, the coding process not only detects visual frequencies or patterns, but also identifies how visuality functions as a discursive practice in constructing 'intelligible gendered subjects'. The integration of Judith Butler's theory into this method also allows for a more reflective reading of quantitative results. For example, significant differences between representations of male and female athletes are not only interpreted as statistical disparities but as indicators of performative gender regulation in sports media discourse. This approach helps bridge the empirical dimension (measurable patterns of representation) with the theoretical dimension (the production of meaning and power in visual representation), resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of how gender bias in social media works through symbolic repetition and visual narratives that appear neutral but are ideological (Butler, 1999; Segal & Demos, 2019).

The unit of analysis in this study is visual units (photographs/images) featuring athletes, both individuals and groups, with the sampling period covering one full competition season, from June 2024 to June 2025, with a total of 1,025 visuals derived from 624 posts. Posts that only contained general promotions, sponsors, or did not explicitly display athletes were excluded from the analysis. There are four main variables analyzed: (1) athlete gender (male or female); (2) visual activity context (competitive action, training, formal pose); (3) type of visual framing (*close-up, mid-shot, wide-shot)*; and (4) *caption tone* (achievement-oriented, personal, humor). These variables were selected to capture the visual and textual aspects that influence the formation of gender narratives on social media, all of which are relevant for understanding gender bias in visual representation (Pramaskara, 2022).

The coding was carried out by two communication science student coders who had been trained to understand the coding scheme instructions consistently. The coders also understood that inter-coder reliability was tested using Cohen's Kappa, which is suitable for measuring agreement in coding nominal data (Aditia et al., 2024). Inter-coder reliability testing was conducted using Cohen's Kappa, which is appropriate for nominal data and measures agreement beyond chance. A Kappa value above 0.80 indicates a very good level of agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977), thus ensuring the reliability of the analyzed data. Data were analyzed using the *chi-square* test to examine differences in the distribution of categorical variables (e.g., differences in gender representation in visual framing or activity contexts). Moderation analysis was conducted to evaluate the role of sports disciplines (football, volleyball, badminton) in reinforcing or weakening the identified gender representation bias. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS version 28. With a

rigorous methodological approach, this study aims not only to reveal differences in gender representation but also to provide empirical evidence that can support more inclusive communication policies and practices in Indonesian sports media.

Coding

To answer the hypotheses and research questions, this study used quantitative content analysis with a systematic approach. This approach facilitated the transformation of visual data into measurable categories, enabling the statistical testing of gender representation patterns. Data was collected from three official Instagram accounts of national sports federations in Indonesia: PSSI (football), PBVSI (volleyball), and PBSI (badminton). These three federations were selected because they have a large and dynamic audience base, representing a variety of popular sports in Indonesia. The observation period covered one full competition season, from June 2024 to June 2025. The unit of analysis was set at the visual level, namely each image featuring athletes, either individually or in groups. A total of 1,025 visuals were obtained, with the following details: PBSI (412 visuals), PBVSI (323 visuals), and PSSI (290 visuals). Four main variables were coded, namely: (1) athlete gender (male/female), (2) visual activity context (competitive action, training, formal pose), (3) visual framing type (*close-up, mid-shot, wide-shot)*, and (4) caption tone (achievement, personal, humor).

Coding was performed by two communication science student coders. Prior to full coding, both underwent intensive training with pilot coding tests on 15% of the initial data to standardize the interpretation of coding guidelines. Inter-coder reliability was measured using Cohen's Kappa, which is suitable for nominal data and takes into account chance agreement. Inter-coder reliability was calculated using Cohen's Kappa, which is a robust method for measuring agreement on nominal data and takes into account the possibility of chance agreement (Cohen, 1960; Landis & Koch, 1977; McHugh, 2012). Based on the calculation results, the following Kappa values were obtained: athlete gender (0.92), visual activity context (0.88), visual framing type (0.90), and caption tone (0.85). All of these values fall into the 'almost perfect' category, indicating a very high level of agreement and supporting the validity of the coding results (Landis & Koch, 1977).

The following table summarizes the Kappa results to further strengthen the evidence of coding reliability (Table 1):

Table 1. Summary of inter-coder reliability.

Variable	Kappa value	Interpretation
Athlete Gender	0.92	Nearly perfect
Visual Activity	0.88	Almost perfect
Visual Framing Type	0.90	Almost perfect
Caption Tone	0.85	Nearly perfect

Any discrepancies between coders are resolved through consensus discussion, until a final agreement is reached for all visual data.

Results

Visual distribution based on athlete gender

Based on coding data from 624 official federation posts, a total of 1025 visuals were analyzed. The visual distribution based on federation and athlete gender can be seen in Table 2:

Table 2. Visual distribution of athletes based on federation and gender.

Federation	Male visuals	Female visuals	Total visuals	% Male	Percentage of females
PSSI	265	25	290	91.4%	8.6%
PBVSI	208	115	323	64.4%	35.6
PBSI	249	163	412	60.4%	39.6%
Total	**722**	**303**	**1,025**	**70.4%**	**29.6**

χ^2 (df = 2, $N = 1,025$) = 301.72, $p < .001$.

The chi-square analysis showed significant differences in all three federations: PSSI (χ^2 = 192.24; $p < 0.001$), PBVSI (χ^2 = 20.05; $p < 0.001$), and PBSI (χ^2 = 16.98; $p < 0.001$). Overall, the results support hypothesis H1 that male athletes are significantly more dominant in visuals, particularly in PSSI, which shows a very strong masculinity bias. Based on the data obtained from the coding results and to test (H1), a total of 624 posts relevant to the visual analysis unit were found, consisting of 1025 individual visuals. The details of the visual distribution based on federation and athlete gender are presented as follows: PSSI (football): 290 visuals, with 265 (91.4%) featuring male athletes and 25 (8.6%) female athletes. PBVSI (volleyball): 323 visuals, with 208 (64.4%) featuring male athletes and 115 (35.6%) female athletes. PBSI (badminton): 412 visuals, with 249 (60.4%) featuring male athletes and 163 (39.6%) female athletes. In aggregate across the three federations, the total number of visuals featuring male athletes was 722 (70.4%), while the number of visuals featuring female athletes was 303 (29.6%).

A chi-square test was conducted to examine differences in gender distribution proportions. The results showed significant differences in PSSI (χ^2 = 192.24; $p < 0.001$) and PBVSI (χ^2 = 20.05; $p < 0.001$), while at PBSI the difference was also significant, albeit lower (χ^2 = 16.98; $p < 0.001$). The aggregate results of the three federations as a whole were also significant (χ^2 = 301.72; $p < 0.001$), supporting the alternative hypothesis (H1). These findings show that posts featuring male athletes are consistently more dominant in all three federations. The very high proportion in PSSI indicates a strong masculine bias in visual representation, in line with the tradition of football, which has historically been closely associated with masculinity.

Visual framing patterns (types of camera angles)

The three framing categories analyzed were close-up, mid-shot, and wide-shot. The distribution of framing based on gender is shown in Table 3:

Table 3. Distribution of visual framing based on athlete gender.

Framing type	Male visuals ($n = 722$)	%	Female visuals ($n = 303$)	%
Close-up	105	14.5	174	57.4
Mid-shot	338	46.8%	89	29.4
Wide shot	279	38.6	40	13.2
Total	**722**	**100**	**303**	**100%**

χ^2 (df = 2, $N = 1,025$) = 198.47, $p < .001$.

Chi-square analysis (χ^2 = 198.47; df = 2; $p < 0.001$) shows a significant difference. Male athletes are more often shown in mid-shots and wide-shots, emphasizing physical performance. In contrast, female athletes are more often shown in close-ups, highlighting facial expressions or personal aspects. This supports hypothesis H2 and reveals a visual construction that tends to reinforce feminine stereotypes. To answer Research Question 2 (RQ2) and test Hypothesis 2 (H2), an analysis was conducted on the visual framing patterns (types of camera shots) used in the official Instagram posts of three Indonesian national sports federations. Three categories of visual framing were coded in this study: *close-up, mid-shot, and wide-shot.* The selection of visual framing functions as a framing device that highlights or limits the physical and expressive representation of athletes (Calbi et al., 2019; Lausiry & Akmal, 2023). Based on the coding results, the distribution of visual framing for male and female athletes is as follows: Male athletes ($n = 722$): Mid-shot: 338 (46.8%), Wide-shot: 279 (38.6%), Close-up: 105 (14.5%). Female athletes ($n = 303$): Close-up: 174 (57.4%), Mid-shot: 89 (29.4%), Wide-shot: 40 (13.2%). Chi-square test analysis showed a significant difference in the distribution of visual framing based on athlete gender (χ^2 = 198.47; df = 2; $p < 0.001$). This distribution is in line with the global trend where male athletes are often represented with a visual style that emphasizes strength, toughness, and competitive capacity. Conversely, *close-up framing* of female athletes can reinforce traditional feminine representations, which emphasize physical beauty or emotional aspects rather than athletic performance (Bruce, 2016). These results support Hypothesis 2 (H2), namely that posts featuring male athletes mostly use competitive action shots (*mid/wide-shot)*, while female athletes are more often shown in *close-up* shots or formal poses. Thus, the null hypothesis (H0), which states that there is no difference in camera framing distribution based on athlete gender, is rejected. The differences in visual framing patterns between male and female athletes on the official Instagram accounts of Indonesian national sports federations reveal the existence of systemic visual construction bias. Male athletes are more associated with physical performance through *mid* and *wide shots,* while female athletes are often focused on personal or aesthetic aspects through *close-ups.*

Context of activities in visuals

Visual activities are categorized into competitive actions, training, and formal poses. The distribution based on gender is as follows Table 4:

Table 4. Distribution of activity context based on athlete gender.

Activity context	Male visuals ($n = 722$)	%	Female visuals ($n = 303$)	%
Competitive action	459	63.6	111	36.6
Training	188	26.0	49	16.2
Formal poses	75	10.4%	143	47.2%
Total	**722**	**100%**	**303**	**100**

χ^2 (df = 2, $N = 1{,}025$) = 152.19, $p < .001$.

Chi-square analysis (χ^2 = 152.19; df = 2; $p < 0.001$) confirmed that male athletes were more often depicted in competitive action or training, while female athletes were more often depicted in formal poses. These results support hypothesis H3, while reinforcing the argument that visual representations of women still tend to emphasize

non-action aspects. The analysis for Research Question 3 (RQ3) and testing of Hypothesis 3 (H3) was conducted on the context of activities depicted in the visuals of male and female athletes. In this study, the visual activity context was classified into three categories: competitive action, training, and formal poses. The competitive action category refers to images that show athletes in moments of competition or peak performance. The training category includes physical activities in training sessions. Meanwhile, the formal poses category refers to images outside the context of action, such as official portraits, promotional photos, or personal activities. Based on the coding results, the distribution of activities for male and female athletes is as follows: Male athletes ($n = 722$): Competitive action: 459 (63.6%), Training: 188 (26.0%), Formal poses: 75 (10.4%). Female athletes ($n = 303$): Formal poses: 143 (47.2%), Competitive actions: 111 (36.6%), Training: 49 (16.2%).

The chi-square test showed a significant difference in the distribution of visual activities based on athlete gender ($\chi^2 = 152.19$; df = 2; $p < 0.001$). These results support Hypothesis 3 (H3), which states that male athletes are more often depicted in the context of competitive action or training, while female athletes are more often represented in non-action contexts (formal poses). This distribution indicates the dominance of representations of masculinity in the visual space of sport, where performance and physical strength are the main attributes associated with male athletes. Conversely, the more frequent representation of female athletes in formal poses reinforces traditional gender constructs that emphasize beauty, personality, and non-action aspects (Kane et al., 2013). These findings are relevant to the framing theory framework, in which the media tends to frame female athletes in narratives that emphasize personal or aesthetic aspects rather than athletic achievements (Cooky et al., 2021), which has the potential to reduce public perception of the competence and credibility of female athletes as professional sports figures. Thus, Hypothesis 3 (H3) is accepted, and Hypothesis 0 (H0) is rejected, as there is a significant difference in the representation of activities between male and female athletes. Significant differences in activity context show how visual constructions on Instagram not only influence how the public views athletes as individuals, but also have implications for the normalization of gender inequality in sport. Representations that emphasize action and training in male athletes reinforce masculine stereotypes, while the dominance of formal poses in female athletes weakens recognition of their athletic capacity.

Narrative tone in captions

Captions are coded as achievement-oriented, personal, and humorous. The distribution based on gender can be seen in Table 5:

Table 5. Distribution of caption tone based on athlete gender.

Caption tone	Male visuals ($n = 722$)	%	Female visuals ($n = 303$)	%
Achievement-oriented	513	71	119	39.3
Personal	156	21.6	158	52.1
Humorous	53	7.3	26	8.6
Total	**722**	**100%**	**303**	**100**

χ^2 (df = 2, $N = 1,025$) = 108.33, $p < .001$.

The chi-square analysis (χ^2 = 108.33; df = 2; $p < 0.001$) showed a significant difference. Captions for male athletes emphasized achievement and competitive performance, while those for female athletes focused more on personal or emotional aspects. This supports hypothesis H4 and reveals a narrative bias that reinforces feminine stereotypes. Analysis of *caption tone* for Research Question 4 (RQ4) and testing Hypothesis 4 (H4), used in captions on the official Instagram posts of PSSI, PBVSI, and PBSI, produced the following results: captions were categorized into three types: achievement-oriented, personal, and humorous. Achievement-oriented captions refer to texts that emphasize competitive achievements, athletic performance, or victories. Personal captions emphasize aspects of the athlete's personal life, personality, or emotions. Meanwhile, humorous captions contain elements of humor or casual language. Based on the coding results, the distribution of caption tones in posts featuring male and female athletes is as follows: Male athletes ($n = 722$): Achievement-oriented: 513 (71.0%), Personal: 156 (21.6%), Humorous: 53 (7.3%). Female athletes ($n = 303$): Personal: 158 (52.1%), Achievement-oriented: 119 (39.3%), Humorous: 26 (8.6%). Chi-square test analysis showed a significant difference in the distribution of caption tones based on athlete gender (χ^2 = 108.33; df = 2; $p < 0.001$). These results support Hypothesis 4 (H4), which states that captions for male athletes' posts are more achievement-oriented, while captions for female athletes' posts more often emphasize personal or emotional aspects.

This distribution confirms the narrative bias inherent in gender representation in digital sports media. Male athletes are predominantly associated with narratives of victory, resilience, and competitive performance. In contrast, female athletes tend to be framed in narratives that focus on personality, emotional experiences, and non-competitive life (Sherwood et al., 2020). These findings are consistent with the framing theory framework, which states that the media, including official social media, not only influences how athletes are visually presented but also constructs meaning through textual narratives (Entman, 1993). Narratives that emphasize the personal aspects of female athletes can reinforce feminine stereotypes that portray women as emotional and 'more human' figures rather than accomplished professional athletes. Thus, Hypothesis 4 (H4) is accepted, while the null hypothesis (H0), which states that there is no difference, is rejected. In RQ4, the significant difference in tone between male and female athletes' posts shows how textual narratives play a role in supporting gender construction. An excessive focus on the personal, and emotional aspects of female athletes has the potential to reduce the visibility and public recognition of their professional competence and achievements.

Moderation based on sports discipline

The moderation analysis shows variations in the strength of representation bias across sports disciplines, summarized in Table 6:

To answer Research Question 5 (RQ5) and test Hypothesis 5 (H5), a moderation analysis was conducted to explore the extent to which football, volleyball, and badminton moderate the gender representation differences identified in RQ1 to RQ4. This analysis used *chi-square test* stratification per sport to reveal specific patterns of representation bias in each federation. Based on the coding results, the pattern

Table 6. Summary of representation patterns based on federation.

Federation	Visual gender dominance	Framing pattern	Activity context	Caption tone
PSSI	Very strong (91.4% male)	Mid & wide shot (men), close-up (women)	Competitive (men), formal (women)	Achievement (men), personal (women)
PBVSI	Moderate (64.4% men)	Mid/wide shot (male), close-up (41% female)	Competitive more prevalent (male)	Achievement more dominant (male), increasing in female
PBSI	Relatively balanced (60.4% male, 39.6% female)	More balanced	More competitive (men), fairly competitive (women)	Achievement relatively balanced

of gender representation differences was most pronounced on the PSSI (football) Instagram account. The visual distribution shows a very high dominance of male athletes (91.4%), while female athletes only account for 8.6%. The chi-square test analysis on PSSI for gender distribution is very significant ($\chi^2 = 192.24$; $p < 0.001$). In terms of visual framing, male athletes in PSSI were mostly shown in mid-shots (52.8%) and *wide shots* (42.3%), while female athletes were dominated by *close-ups* (84%). The *chi-square framing* results for PSSI were also significant ($\chi^2 = 112.45$; $p < 0.001$). In terms of activity, male athletes in PSSI were almost entirely shown in competitive action (82.3%), while female athletes were more often shown in formal poses (56%). *The chi-square test* for PSSI activity showed a highly significant difference ($\chi^2 = 124.08$; $p < 0.001$). The tone of the captions also reinforced these findings, where 89% *of captions* for male athletes were achievement-oriented, while 72% of captions for female athletes emphasized personal or emotional aspects ($\chi^2 = 103.17$; $p < 0.001$).

On the PBVSI (volleyball) account, gender representation differences were still significant but not as strong as in football. Male athletes dominated (64.4%), but female athletes were more represented than on the PSSI account (35.6%). The distribution of framing shows a tendency toward mid-shots and wide-shots for men (73%), while women are more often shown in close-ups (41%). The chi-square results for PBVSI are significant but lower (χ^2 ranges from 15 to 38; $p < 0.001$). In terms of activity, the proportion of competitive action by male athletes (68%) was higher, while female athletes were more often shown in formal poses (38%). The tone of male captions remained more achievement-oriented (68%), but women showed an increase in achievement narratives (51%). In PBSI (badminton), gender representation was the most balanced. The proportion of male (60.4%) and female (39.6%) visuals showed a relatively more equitable distribution. The distribution *of framing,* activity, and *captions* also showed a more balanced pattern. For example, *mid-shot* and *wide-shot framing* of male athletes reached 68%, while close-ups of female athletes were only 33%. Competitive action activities were also higher for men (62%), but female athletes were also relatively often shown in action (49%). Achievement-oriented *captions* for men (65%) and women (59%) had insignificant differences ($\chi^2 = 3.14$; $p = 0.076$).

The stratification test results show that sports disciplines play a significant moderating role in strengthening or weakening gender representation bias. This supports Hypothesis 5 (H5) that gender representation differences are strongest in football (PSSI), weaker in volleyball (PBVSI), and weakest in badminton (PBSI). Thus, the null

hypothesis (H0), which states that sports disciplines do not moderate gender representation differences, is rejected. These findings show that the context of sports has a significant influence on shaping gender representation. Football, as a historically masculine sport, exhibits a very strong pattern of gender bias. Volleyball, although still biased, shows a higher level of inclusivity. Meanwhile, badminton relatively displays a more equitable distribution and has the potential to be an example of more inclusive representation practices in digital sports media in Indonesia.

Discussion

This study aims to quantitatively analyze the potential for gender discrimination in the visual representation of athletes on the official Instagram accounts of Indonesia's national sports federations, focusing on the dimensions of gender distribution, visual framing patterns, activity context, and caption tone. These findings confirm the existence of unequal representation patterns, reinforcing previous literature on gender inequality in sports media (Cooky et al., 2021; Kane et al., 2013; Sherwood et al., 2020). Analysis of RQ1, shows a significant dominance of male athlete representation in all three federations, particularly in PSSI with a proportion of 91.4% male athletes. These results are in line with previous studies that confirm that football has historically been positioned as a masculine space (Nurjaya et al., 2020; Prastya et al., 2022). This masculine bias not only perpetuates traditional gender stereotypes but also narrows the space for female athletes to appear as equal national sports figures (Burroughs et al., 2022).

In RQ2, the results show that male athletes are more often portrayed through mid-shot and wide-shot visual framing, which emphasizes strength, physical performance, and competitive context. In contrast, female athletes are dominated by close-up framing, which tends to focus attention on personal or aesthetic aspects. This supports framing theory (Goffman, 1974; Entman, 1993), which states that visual framing choices not only influence audience perception but also reinforce certain narratives. These findings are in line with global studies that found that close-up framing is often used to support feminine stereotypes that emphasize beauty and emotion (Bruce, 2016; Toffoletti & Thorpe, 2018).

The results of the analysis of RQ3 reinforce the dominance of masculine narratives through the context of visual activities. Male athletes are more often shown in competitive action and training, while female athletes are more often shown in formal poses. This representation shows the reinforcement of gender hierarchy in the realm of digital sports in Indonesia, where physical superiority and performance are still dominated by male athletes, while female athletes are reduced to narratives of personality or non-action social roles (Fernández & Muñoz, 2021; Kane et al., 2013). This not only affects public perception but also has the potential to diminish the legitimacy of female athletes as competitive professional figures (Minikel-Lacocque, 2020).

Analysis of RQ4 on caption tone shows that achievement narratives dominate for male athletes, while female athletes are more often given narratives that emphasize personal or emotional aspects. These results confirm findings that social media, including Instagram, tends to frame female athletes in the context of noncompetitive narratives that emphasize personality, emotions, or interpersonal warmth (Romney &

Johnson, 2020; Sherwood et al., 2020). Thus, social media contributes to reinforcing established gender biases in traditional sports media coverage (Pramaskara, 2022; Yang et al., 2020).

The findings of RQ5 indicate that sports serve as significant moderators. Football (PSSI) exhibits the strongest gender bias, volleyball (PBVSI) shows more moderate differences, and badminton (PBSI) is relatively more inclusive. This phenomenon can be explained through the cultural and historical contexts of each sport. Football in Indonesia is often associated with masculinity and nationalism (Prastya et al., 2022), while badminton has long been valued as a space where male and female athletes equally contribute to national achievements (PBSI, 2024). These results reinforce findings in the literature that the sporting context greatly determines the intensity of gender representation bias (Allain & Dotto, 2024; Wilson & Mcneilly, 2013).

In Figure 1, regarding the comparison of content distribution with the themes studied, through the perspective of framing theory (Goffman, 1974; Entman, 1993), this figure shows that the official accounts of sports federations not only convey information but also shape social meaning through visual choices and narratives. Systemic visual and textual framing reinforces the dominance of male athletes and marginalizes female athletes. Such practices have the potential to hinder efforts to promote gender equality in Indonesian sports and contradict global commitments, such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Gender Equality Review Project (Santana & Oliveira, 2022). The official Instagram accounts of national sports federations in Indonesia implicitly maintain gender-biased representation structures. This study's findings indicate that the official social media (Instagram) accounts of Indonesian sports federations, particularly PSSI, PBVSI, and PBSI, still reproduce gender-biased representation structures through different narratives and visualizations of male and female athletes. Male athletes are generally constructed through narratives of
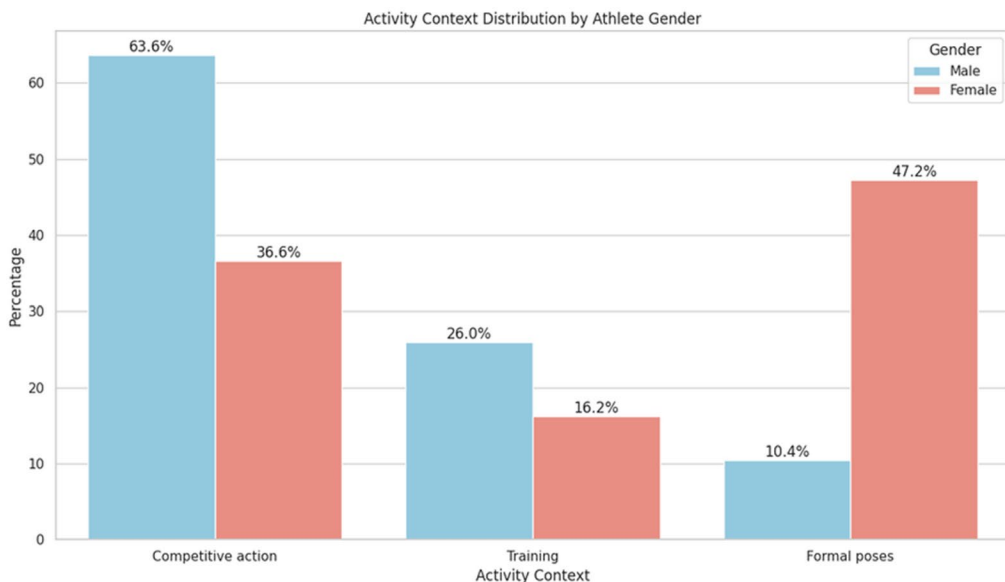

Figure 1. Overall distribution of Instagram content. *Source:* Author's own documentation (2025).

achievement and competition, while female athletes are more often positioned within personal, emotional, and relational frameworks. This phenomenon in the Instagram content of Indonesian sports federations shows that gender is not a fixed identity, but rather the result of repeated actions (*performative acts)* that create the impression that gender is natural and stable (Butler, 1999). Media representation of athletes is not merely a reflection of reality but part of the process *of performing gender,* i.e., how existing Instagram content is symbolically presented and repeated until it appears natural. However, when these Instagram accounts highlight emotional expression, warmth, and personality for female athletes, the media is actually reaffirming traditional gender constructs, that women are synonymous with the emotional and domestic spheres, while men are associated with rationality, strength, and public achievement. Thus, narratives that appear neutral actually function as performative practices that maintain *the heteronormative matrix* (Butler, 1993; Segal & Demos, 2019). A symbolic order that binds the relationship between biological sex, gender expression, and social orientation. These findings support the need for collective efforts between federations, the media, and society to build fair and empowering visual narratives, thereby increasing awareness, expanding participation, and strengthening the legitimacy of female athletes in Indonesia.

Conclusion

This study reveals that the visual representation of athletes on the official Instagram accounts of Indonesian national sports federations is still dominated by unequal gender constructions. Analysis of 1,025 visuals from the PSSI, PBVSI, and PBSI accounts shows that male athletes receive a much larger share of exposure than female athletes, with a proportion of more than two-thirds of the total visual content. Male athletes are more often represented in the context of competition, action, and victory, emphasizing strength and achievement, while female athletes tend to be portrayed through visuals that emphasize their personal side, emotional expression, and physical beauty. This pattern indicates that visual constructions in sports social media are not neutral representations, but rather the result of a symbolic process that continuously repeats and reinforces cultural gender differences. There is a discourse of power that appears neutral but perpetuates gender inequality in the world of sports.

Through Judith Butler's *gender performativity* theory framework, these findings show that media representation functions as a form of performative action that produces gendered realities through the repetition of certain images and narratives. In this case, social media functions not only as a means of communication, but also as a discursive mechanism that shapes gender subjects and reinforces heteronormative norms in the world of sports. The representation of female athletes framed in images of gentleness or esthetics, as well as the representation of male athletes associated with strength and victory, are forms of symbolic repetition that reinforce the dominant gender order.

The results of this study show that power works subtly through visual practices and language that appear objective, but in fact maintain hierarchical relations between masculinity and femininity. Thus, gender bias in the visual representation of athletes on the social media of Indonesian sports federations is not only a difference in frequency of appearance, but an expression of social ideology that structures meanings

about the body, roles, and identity. These findings emphasize the importance of reading digital media as an arena of discourse that shapes, rather than merely reflects, social realities about gender and power in the context of modern Indonesian sport.

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