

STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING FEMALE ATHLETES

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Information	Abstract
History: Submitted; January 2026 Revised; February 2026 Accepted; March 2026 Keywords: Strategy; Female; Athlete.	Achievement strategies are crucial in the process of achieving success, especially for female athletes who often face the dual challenges of gender stereotypes and limited institutional support. This study aims to identify the obstacles faced by female athletes at UIN Walisongo Semarang in achieving sporting achievements, the strategies used to overcome these obstacles, and the influence of these strategies on the development of female athletes' achievements. The study used a qualitative method with a case study approach, through in-depth interviews and participant observation of female athletes in the campus environment. The results showed that the main obstacles faced included gender discrimination, limited facilities, and a lack of social and institutional support. The strategies implemented by female athletes included increasing intrinsic motivation, building social networks, and adapting to less supportive environments. The analysis showed that these strategies were effective in increasing athletes' self-confidence and motivation, although institutional policy support is still needed to create a more equal ecosystem. The implications of this study emphasize the importance of institutional interventions and cultural changes to support female athletes' achievements in general.

INTRODUCTION

Sport is a physical activity that not only helps you stay healthy but also helps you develop, build character, and participate in various competitions that encompass various social and cultural aspects. For years, sport has been an integral part of people's lives in many countries. In fact, through the achievements of athletes who have brought honor to their countries, sport has become a symbol of national pride. Participating in this popular sport, basketball, requires skill, physical strength, and good teamwork. Basketball is more than just a competition; it is a means to instill sportsmanship, discipline, and a fighting spirit in its athletes.

Research on female athletes' performance strategies has been discussed by several previous researchers, one of which was by Jannah et al. (2022) entitled "Sports Achievement Motivation in Student Athletes During the Covid-19 Pandemic in East Java." This study discusses the phenomenon of student athletes having to balance the demands of being students at school with the obligation to train and excel in sports, which has become increasingly challenging when the pandemic forces learning and training to be conducted online. In this situation, student athletes face various obstacles such as difficulty understanding the material independently, limited interaction with teachers and coaches, limited practice space, and reduced opportunities for direct training and competition. These conditions have the potential to reduce athletes' motivation to achieve, even though motivation is a crucial psychological aspect in supporting sporting achievements.

This study differs from the research conducted by Jannah et al. (2022) in that it focuses on the efforts and strategies employed by female athletes from the WSC UIN Walisongo Semarang to address the challenges of gender equality in the campus sports environment. This study seeks to uncover how female athletes overcome the stereotype that sport is a male domain, limited support, and unequal access to facilities. Furthermore, this study explores the role of campus institutions and the surrounding environment in supporting or hindering the development of female athletes' achievements. This phenomenon is since discrimination, and socio-cultural barriers still hinder female athletes from achieving optimal performance. Therefore, this study aims to provide a more specific picture of the struggles and strategies employed by female athletes to maintain their achievements, while also providing input for creating a more equitable and supportive sports environment for women in higher education.

With the description above, this study tries to uncover three main things, namely, what are the obstacles faced by female athletes of WSC UIN Walisongo Semarang in achieving sports achievements, what strategies or efforts are made by female athletes in overcoming these obstacles, and how the strategies implemented influence the development of female athletes' achievements. These questions assume that the challenges faced by female athletes are not only individual but are also influenced by socio-cultural factors and institutional support that can influence their success in achieving in the campus sports environment.

METHODS

This research used a qualitative method with a case study approach to gain a deeper understanding of the barriers, strategies, and impacts of achievement strategies for female athletes at UIN Walisongo Semarang. The study was conducted in 2024, primarily on the UIN Walisongo campus, which has an active female athlete community. Subjects were purposively selected, including female athletes experienced in competition and facing challenges to achievement within the campus environment.

Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to understand the athletes' activities directly, while semi-structured interviews explored their experiences and strategies. Photographic documentation supported the observations and interviews.

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive qualitative methods, including reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results are expected to provide insight into the challenges and strategies female athletes face in achieving achievement, as well as provide input for creating a more supportive campus sports environment for women.

RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

Results

Barriers Faced by Female Athletes at UIN Walisongo Semarang in Achieving Sports Achievement

Research results show that female athletes at UIN Walisongo Semarang face complex and multidimensional barriers, ranging from physical, social, psychological, and structural aspects. The most prominent barrier is the persistent gender stereotypes and stigmas inherent in campus sports. These stereotypes give rise to the perception that women are physically weaker, less agile, and less able to compete optimally, both in physical sports like volleyball and basketball, and in e-sports. As a result, female athletes are often underestimated, not taken seriously, and even marginalized from opportunities to develop. As Informant 1 (volleyball athlete) expressed it:

"From my experience as a female volleyball athlete, the biggest obstacle is usually stereotypes. Many people think women are weak and less agile, so they are sometimes considered incapable of running long distances or unprepared to receive passes from teammates... As a result, we are often considered difficult to keep up with the fast pace of the game, and sometimes even marginalized."

A similar view was expressed by Informant 3 (a Mobile Legends e-sports athlete):

"Gender stigma is still very strong. Many consider women physically and emotionally weak, making them less worthy of competing, including in e-sports. The perception that men are more dominant often leads to women being underestimated or not taken seriously, which impacts self-confidence."

Furthermore, a lack of trust from teammates, especially male athletes, is another obstacle. In mixed training or matches, female athletes are often not given equal playing opportunities. This was reinforced by Informant 2 (a basketball athlete):

"Sometimes they underestimate girls' abilities. For example, when playing with girls, the guys don't really trust the girls' abilities, so they rarely pass the ball to us. In the end, we don't get the chance to play."

The lack of events or competitions specifically for women also limits opportunities for self-development and achievement.

"There are far fewer events for women than for men. Sometimes we feel like we're not considered worthy of competing, even though if we practice consistently and have the opportunity, we can compete. But unfortunately, the competition facilities for women are severely lacking." (Informant 2, basketball athlete)

Another significant obstacle is the difficulty in managing time between classes and training. A busy academic schedule often clashes with training schedules, so female athletes must have excellent time management skills to avoid falling behind in both areas.

"There are so many obstacles, especially during training. Sometimes it's hard to adjust your mood and stay motivated, and you're afraid of losing or disappointing your coach. Furthermore, the most challenging part is managing your time between classes and training. Especially when you have a lot of assignments or final exams, you sometimes don't know where to focus. If you can't manage your time well, your studies and training can become sluggish and inconsistent." (Informant 4, PSHT athlete)

The lack of adequate facilities and coaches is also a serious obstacle.

"The facilities and coaches on campus are still inadequate, and training time is also very limited..." (Informant 5, badminton athlete)

Furthermore, the lack of support and motivation from those around them, including family, friends, and institutions, further complicates the struggles for female athletes.

"Support from the surrounding environment is also sometimes lacking, especially regarding motivation and recognition for female athletes." (Informant 5, badminton athlete)

The various obstacles faced by female athletes at UIN Walisongo Semarang, ranging from gender stereotypes, lack of trust and opportunities, to limited support and facilities, demonstrate that the challenges they face are not only personal but also systemic. These obstacles are interconnected and reinforce each other, requiring collective efforts and broader cultural change to create a truly inclusive and gender-equal sports environment. Understanding these obstacles is crucial as a basis for formulating appropriate strategies to support the development of female athletes' achievements.

Strategies or Efforts Undertaken by Female Athletes to Overcome Obstacles

In the face of these obstacles, female athletes at UIN Walisongo Semarang have developed various adaptive strategies to survive and thrive in the world of campus sports. One key strategy is maintaining focus on their initial motivation and goals for playing. By remembering the underlying reasons for choosing a particular sport, athletes can maintain their passion and dedication despite facing tough challenges. Informant 1 (volleyball athlete) emphasized:

"I usually focus very much on my initial motivation and goals for playing volleyball. If I want to try something new, I show it through hard work and a passion for continuous learning."

Furthermore, increasing the intensity of training and training with male athletes is also an important strategy for demonstrating ability and reducing gender stigma.

"We often train with boys so they can see our skills and not underestimate us. So, when we play together, everyone has an equal opportunity." (Informant 2, basketball athlete)

Building self-confidence and ignoring negative comments from those around me are other important steps, as expressed by Informant 3 (e-sports athlete):

"I try to build my confidence gradually by focusing on developing my skills and performance in the game and not dwelling too much on negative comments from those around me."

Consistency in training is also highly emphasized, even though sometimes I must force myself to keep practicing even when I'm not in the best mental state.

"I usually force myself to keep practicing, even when I'm not in the best mood. Every time I practice, I try to keep my mind clear and ready to accept the training material the coach gives me." (Informant 4, PSHT athlete)

Some athletes even choose to attend paid training outside of campus to access better facilities and coaches.

"I attend paid badminton training outside of campus so I can get better facilities and coaches, so my skills can be further honed." (Informant 5, badminton athlete)

The strategies employed by female athletes from UIN Walisongo Semarang demonstrate resilience, creativity, and a strong fighting spirit in the face of various obstacles. Focusing on motivation, improving the quality of training, building self-confidence, and seeking external support are key to maintaining consistency and a spirit of achievement. These strategies not only help them persevere amidst challenges but also encourage changes in perception and culture within the campus sports environment. Thus, the strategies employed by female athletes not only impact personal development but also contribute to the creation of a more inclusive and supportive environment for women in sports.

The Impact of Strategies on Developing Female Athletes' Performance

The strategies implemented by female athletes at UIN Walisongo Semarang have been shown to have a significant positive impact on developing their performance, including technical and physical abilities, motivation, and competitive mentality. Structured and consistent training, supported by strong internal motivation, encourages athletes to continuously improve their technical and physical abilities through regular training, both individually and in groups. Furthermore, promoting achievements through social media is a key part of the advocacy strategy, which is slowly beginning to change public perceptions of female athletes. Interviews with informants indicate that the strategy of focusing on motivation and initial goals helps maintain their enthusiasm and dedication, even when facing tough challenges. As Informant 1 (volleyball athlete) expressed:

"By focusing on my initial goals, I don't give up easily. Every time I encounter problems or get tired of training, I remember why I started volleyball. That keeps me motivated to train and keeps me from giving up easily."

The strategy of training alongside male athletes has also proven effective in boosting self-confidence and competitive ability. Informant 2 (basketball athlete) stated:

"Training with guys makes me more confident. At first, I felt insecure, but over time, I got used to it and became even more motivated to prove that girls can play well too. Now I'm more confident in mixed-gender matches."

Meanwhile, building self-confidence and ignoring negative comments from those around me are important steps to maintaining mental health and motivation. Informant 3 (e-sports athlete) said:

"I used to get down when there were negative comments, but now I focus more on my skills and training results. If someone belittles me, I use it as motivation to prove that I can do it. As a result, I'm calmer and less easily influenced by what others say."

Consistency in training also has a positive impact on the athletes' physical and mental abilities. Informant 4 (PSHT athlete) revealed:

"Even though I'm sometimes tired or in a bad mood, I still try to train. As a result, I'm physically stronger and mentally more prepared for matches. I've also become more disciplined in managing my time between studying and training."

Furthermore, participating in paid training outside of campus provides access to better facilities and coaches, further honing their skills. Informant 5 (badminton athlete) stated:

"After participating in off-campus training, my skills have improved. I've also gained more competition experience and learned new techniques from more experienced coaches. This has given me more confidence to compete in competitions."

Overall, the strategies implemented not only improve technical and physical abilities but also strengthen motivation, self-confidence, and training consistency. Good time management between academics and sports helps female athletes maintain a balance, allowing both to proceed simultaneously without compromising one another. Consistent training, even with limited facilities, fosters a winning mentality and a strong fighting spirit in female athletes. Based on the experiences of the informants, it can be concluded that the strategies implemented can encourage increased individual achievement while contributing to a change in culture and perception within the campus environment regarding the role and potential of women in sports. Female athletes at UIN Walisongo Semarang not only persevere in the face of challenges but also demonstrate resilience, creativity, and a fighting spirit that is worthy of recognition.

Discussions

Based on research findings, the various dynamics and obstacles faced by female athletes at UIN Walisongo Semarang in their pursuit of sporting success are clearly illustrated. These challenges are complex and interconnected, ranging from persistent gender-based stereotypes and stigmas within the campus sports environment, low trust from teammates to limited competitive opportunities and the lack of women-specific competitions. The perception that women are not strong enough, agile enough, or competitive enough in both conventional sports like volleyball and basketball, and in e-sports, limits female athletes' mobility and undermines their self-confidence. This situation is further exacerbated by challenges in managing time between academic studies and training activities, inadequate facilities and infrastructure, and minimal support from their social environment, including family and institutions.

Despite these challenges, the female athletes are not passive. Instead, they demonstrate a high level of adaptive capacity, along with enthusiasm and resilience in the face of various obstacles. Maintaining focus on their initial goal of playing sports is a crucial factor in maintaining their motivation. In addition to increasing the frequency and quality of their training, many of them chose to train alongside male athletes to demonstrate their abilities and demand equal treatment. Other strategies employed included building self-confidence, ignoring negative comments, maintaining consistency in training, and implementing effective time management. Some even took the initiative to attend off-campus training at their own expense to access better facilities and coaching guidance and actively publicized their achievements through social media to campaign for public recognition and support.

The results of these various strategies have had a tangible positive impact on improving the performance and achievements of female athletes. Systematic training and strong internal motivation contribute to improved technical skills, physical fitness, and mental readiness for competition. The confidence developed through interaction with male athletes and participation in competitions also strengthens their competitive mentality. Furthermore, strong time management skills enable them to balance academic achievement and sporting commitments simultaneously. Although limited facilities remain a challenge, consistent training demonstrates strong commitment and fosters a strong fighting character.

The results of this study indicate that although the obstacles faced by female athletes at UIN Walisongo remain significant and systemic, they can demonstrate resilience and ingenuity in navigating these challenges. The strategies developed not only have a positive impact on individual achievement but also encourage social transformation within the campus environment, particularly in recognizing and recognizing the potential and role of women in sports. Therefore, the efforts and innovations of these female athletes deserve recognition and ongoing support, to create a more just, equitable, and inclusive sports ecosystem in the future.

However, this study has several limitations that should be considered. This study focused only on female athletes within the WSC UIN Walisongo Semarang, so the results cannot necessarily be generalized to female athletes on other campuses or in other regions with different characteristics and challenges. Furthermore, the data collected is primarily qualitative and does not quantitatively measure the influence of the strategies implemented on improving female athletes' performance. This study also does not in-depth explore the role of coaches, families, or institutional policies in supporting or hindering the development of female athletes more broadly.

Therefore, for future research, it is recommended that similar studies be conducted on campus or in other sports communities with a larger and more diverse number of participants, so that the results can be compared and used as a broader reference. Further research could also use a mixed methods approach to more objectively measure the influence of strategies on female athletes' performance. Furthermore, it is important to further examine the roles of coaches, families, and institutional policies in building an environment that supports gender equality in sports, so that efforts to empower female athletes can be more optimal and sustainable.

CONCLUSION

Although the world of sports has long been synonymous with male dominance, female athletes at the WSC UIN Walisongo Semarang have proven that they can also excel and compete fairly. They not only have to face physical and technical challenges in training and competitions, but also various social and cultural barriers that often underestimate women's abilities in sports. The female athletes employ various strategies, from building self-motivation, seeking support from their surroundings, to adapting to limited facilities. These findings demonstrate that the struggle of female athletes is not only about physical training, but also a mental and social struggle to gain recognition and equal opportunities.

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