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Normative Analysis: Regulatory Critique of Match Fixing Crimes in the 2018-2019 Liga 2 Football Competition

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze the legal framework governing match-fixing practices in the 2018–2019 Indonesian Liga 2 soccer competition and to identify weaknesses in the existing regulations. This study employs a normative legal method with a legislative approach. The findings indicate that match-fixing practices can, in principle, be prosecuted under the provisions of Law No. 11 of 1980 on Bribery Offenses; however, there are currently no specific regulations explicitly classifying match manipulation as a distinct criminal offense under Indonesian positive law. This situation creates legal uncertainty and limitations in law enforcement, particularly regarding all forms of match manipulation. Therefore, regulations are needed to establish a specific offense related to match fixing to ensure legal certainty and the effectiveness of law enforcement in the field of sports.

A. INTRODUCTION

Match-fixing is the practice of intentionally manipulating the outcome of a match to gain an advantage, whether financial or competitive. This practice poses one of the greatest threats to integrity in modern sports, as it undermines the principle of fair play, which serves as the foundation for the conduct of sports competitions (Hessert & Goh, 2022). On a global scale, various international sports organizations and agencies have developed specific policies to prevent and address match-fixing.

Many countries worldwide have some of the largest soccer fan bases, and Indonesia is one of them. In Indonesia, cases of match-fixing began to receive serious attention following the emergence of several allegations of score-fixing in national soccer competitions. Several similar cases also indicate involvement by parties with influence over the course of matches, such as match officials, as well as other parties and actors outside the team structure. This phenomenon has raised concerns about the weakness of oversight systems and law enforcement mechanisms in national sports, particularly in soccer, where there have been numerous match-fixing cases.

The issues that arise are not only related to sports ethics but also involve legal aspects. Under the Indonesian legal system, regulations regarding match manipulation have not yet been specifically addressed in legislation (Rusdiana et al., 2025). Consequently, law enforcement against such match-fixing practices often relies on the disciplinary mechanisms of sports organizations and/or the application of general criminal law provisions, such as bribery offenses (Siregar, 2018).

Given this background, this study aims to examine and analyze the legal framework governing match-fixing practices within Indonesia's sports legal system, as well as the enforcement of these laws, through a case study of a national soccer competition—specifically, the match-fixing case in the Liga 2 soccer competition that occurred during the 2018–2019 season.

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a normative legal methodology to analyze legal regulations regarding regulatory gaps in match-fixing practices during the 2018–2019 Liga 2 season.

The approaches used include legal, conceptual, and case-based approaches. The legal approach involves examining Law No. 11 of 1980 on Bribery Offenses (Republic of Indonesia, 1980), Law No. 11 of 2022 on Sports (Republic of Indonesia, 2022), and the Criminal Code. The case study approach was used to analyze the match-fixing practices involving Joko Driyono (Hartawan, 2023).

The legal materials consist of primary and secondary sources collected through a literature review. The analysis was conducted qualitatively by linking legal norms and facts to address the research questions.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the case of match-fixing in the 2018–2019 Indonesian Liga 2 competition, law enforcement was carried out under the provisions of Law No. 11 of 1980 on Bribery Offenses (Republic of Indonesia, 1980). The application of these provisions is based on the existence of the element of giving and/or receiving something with the intent to influence the outcome of a match. Nevertheless, under Indonesian positive law, the act of manipulating matches or match-fixing has not yet been classified as an independent criminal offense (Rusdiana et al., 2025). This contrasts with several other jurisdictions that have recognized match manipulation as a specific criminal offense within the sports sector (Hessert & Goh, 2022). Consequently, this results in a legal approach to match fixing that remains piecemeal and relies on the construction of existing offenses.

Several individuals were involved in the case, including not only players but also soccer organization officials and other parties with influence over the course of the matches. One figure who garnered public attention and stood out in the case was Joko Driyono, who at the time served as Deputy Chairman of the Indonesian Soccer Association (PSSI) for the 2016–2020 term. Joko Driyono (JK) was implicated in a case involving obstruction of justice, which revealed a connection between match-fixing and other criminal offenses within the criminal justice system (Hartawan, 2023). In addition, there is also the role of intermediaries (brokers) who connect the bribe givers and recipients. Furthermore, there are actors off the field who facilitate the continuation of such manipulation, such as referees, assistant referees, coaches, and assistant coaches.

However, the application of the law in this case demonstrates that not all acts related to match-fixing or match manipulation can be subject to criminal prosecution. This is due to limitations in proving the elements of bribery, particularly in the absence of a transaction or agreement.

Because bribery offenses have a limited capacity to address match-fixing, the use of Law No. 11 of 1980 on Bribery Offenses (Republic of Indonesia, 1980) as the legal basis for enforcement raises several legal issues. First, bribery offenses require a reciprocal relationship between the giver and the recipient, which in match-fixing cases cannot always be clearly established. Second, not all forms of match manipulation involve the exchange of financial or other benefits and thus do not meet the elements of bribery. Furthermore, the application of bribery offenses risks unduly restricting the scope of law enforcement, as only acts meeting specific elements can be prosecuted criminally. Consequently, systematic match manipulation practices that do not directly involve acts of bribery may evade legal consequences.

In addition, certain provisions of the Indonesian Criminal Code, particularly those related to fraud or deception, may be considered in addressing match-fixing practices. However, these provisions are inherently limited, as they do not specifically regulate the unique characteristics of match manipulation, thereby reinforcing the existence of a normative gap in Indonesian positive law (Republik Indonesia, 2023).

The provisions of Law No. 11 of 2022 on Sports do not explicitly criminalize match-fixing (Republic of Indonesia, 2022). Existing regulations focus more on administrative and developmental aspects, without providing a clear criminal legal basis for match manipulation. This reveals a normative gap, leading to legal uncertainty in handling match-fixing cases (Rusdiana et al., 2025). Consequently, law enforcement officials are often required to interpret offenses broadly, which risks creating inconsistencies in the application of the law.

When viewed globally, specific regulations regarding match-fixing have already been implemented and established in several countries, such as Italy, Australia, and Germany. However, given the high number of cases in Indonesia without specific regulations, perpetrators of match-fixing are only subject to administrative or disciplinary sanctions, such as bans on participating in related sports activities. Meanwhile, not all perpetrators are prosecuted through criminal legal mechanisms. This duality raises concerns regarding the overall effectiveness of the law enforcement system. On the one hand, disciplinary sanctions can be imposed more quickly and flexibly. On the other hand, the absence of criminal sanctions for certain acts can reduce the deterrent effect and fail to reflect the seriousness of the violations committed.

Thus, based on an analysis of existing cases and regulations, it can be concluded that there is a need to consider establishing a specific offense related to match-fixing. This specific offense is expected to provide a clear definition of match manipulation, expand the scope of legal subjects, cover various forms of match-fixing practices, and enhance legal certainty in law enforcement. Therefore, in establishing a specific offense, clear boundaries must also be considered to prevent overcriminalization. Consequently, not all violations in sports should be criminalized, but only acts that have a significant impact on the integrity of competitions and the public interest.

D. CONCLUSION

Match-fixing practices in the 2018–2019 Indonesian Liga 2 competition demonstrate serious violations of sports integrity and the principle of fair play. Law enforcement, which has largely relied on Law No. 11 of 1980 on Bribery Offenses, has not been able to comprehensively address all forms of match manipulation. While certain conduct may be prosecuted under bribery provisions, their limited scope and structural constraints have resulted in fragmented law enforcement and highlight a normative gap when compared to global regulatory frameworks. The current approach does not enable all perpetrators to be effectively held criminally accountable.

In addition, the reliance on administrative and disciplinary sanctions alone is insufficient to ensure a consistent deterrent effect, particularly for more complex and systemic forms of match manipulation. Therefore, it is necessary to formulate a specific criminal offense related to match-fixing within Indonesia's sports legal system to enhance legal certainty, broaden regulatory coverage, and improve the overall effectiveness of law enforcement. However, such regulation must be carefully designed to avoid overcriminalization and should be limited to conduct that significantly undermines the integrity of sports competitions. The establishment of a specific offense should be understood as a necessary but not sufficient step, as challenges in enforcement and evidentiary limitations remain significant.

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