



## Exploring the Role of Recreational Sports in Improving the Quality of Life in South Jakarta: A Multigenerational Study

Franciska Dina Dameria<sup>1ABCD</sup>, Yasep Setiakarnawijaya<sup>1AB</sup>, Ilham<sup>2BC</sup>, Hadi<sup>3E</sup>, Asmadi Bin Ishak<sup>4CE</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup> Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup> Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

<sup>4</sup> Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia

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Corresponding Author: Franciska Dina Dameria, franciskamarpaung@gmail.com

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### ABSTRACTS

<b>Purpose</b>	This study aims to examine the role of recreational sports in improving the quality of life among urban residents in South Jakarta through a multigenerational perspective. It seeks to understand how participation in non-competitive physical activities contributes to physical health, psychological well-being, social connection, and spiritual fulfillment across different age groups.
<b>Materials and Methods</b>	The research employed a qualitative exploratory-descriptive approach to capture participants' lived experiences and personal meanings of recreational sport. Twenty respondents representing four generations: Generation Z, Millennials, Generation X, and Baby Boomers, were purposively selected. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and short field observations focusing on activity type, motivation, perceived benefits, intergenerational interactions, and participation barriers. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns, similarities, and differences among generations. Data validity was strengthened through triangulation, participant verification, and reflective analysis.
<b>Result</b>	The study revealed that recreational activities such as walking, gymnastics, yoga, and futsal significantly enhance physical fitness, emotional balance, and social relationships. Participants viewed these activities as opportunities for relaxation, stress relief, and self-expression. Intergenerational engagement fostered empathy and social cohesion, while some respondents associated recreational sport with spiritual awareness and gratitude. However, constraints such as limited open spaces, uneven access to facilities, and safety concerns remained significant challenges.
<b>Conclusion</b>	Recreational sport serves as a multidimensional avenue for promoting health, emotional resilience, and intergenerational harmony. Integrating inclusive and accessible recreational programs into urban planning is essential for building healthier, more connected, and sustainable communities.
<b>Keywords</b>	Recreational sport; Intergenerational; Urban health; Physical activity.



## INTRODUCTION

The changing structure of urban life, characterized by high work pressure, high mobility, environmental pollution, and limited green open spaces, poses a significant challenge to city dwellers' quality of life. In this context, recreational sports are among the possible alternative approaches to improve people's physical, mental, and social health (Rosli et al., 2020). Recreational sport, which is non-competitive and focuses on fun and participation, is accessible to a wide range of age groups and socio-economic backgrounds, making it an inclusive tool to promote healthy lifestyles (WHO, 2018). Previous research has shown that participation in recreational sports is positively correlated with improved mental health, reduced stress, and increased social interaction in urban environments (Song & Lin, 2022). Furthermore, regular physical activity in recreational settings has been shown to increase cardiorespiratory fitness, improve sleep patterns, and reduce the risk of non-communicable diseases such as hypertension and diabetes (Hadavandsiri et al., 2023). However, implementing recreational sports in urban areas poses challenges. Limited public facilities, social isolation, and unequal access due to age and gender are significant barriers (Kruszyńska & Poczta, 2020). In addition, the lack of municipal policies and programs that support community participation in recreational sport is also an inhibiting factor in creating an active environment in urban areas (Chen et al., 2017).

Interestingly, an intergenerational approach is becoming increasingly important in the study of recreational sport. Younger generations (Generation Z and Millennials) prefer technology-based activities such as e-sports and app-based gyms. In comparison, older generations (Baby Boomers and Generation X) prefer traditional activities such as morning exercises, Tai Chi, or walks in city parks (Juniawan, 2024; Simanjuntak et al., 2022). Therefore, understanding the differences in motivations, barriers, and perceived benefits between generations is key to designing effective and sustainable recreational sports programs. Therefore, this study aims to explore in depth the role of recreational sports in improving the quality of life in urban communities through an intergenerational approach. This approach will not only reveal the preferences and perceptions of different age groups but also provide strategic insights for policymakers and community sport practitioners.

The main objective of this study is to investigate the role of recreational sport in improving the quality of life of urban residents from an intergenerational perspective. The study aims to identify differences and similarities in motivations, activity types, barriers, and perceived benefits of recreational sports between different generations, namely Generation Z, Millennials, Generation X, and Baby Boomers. The objectives of this study include, in detail: (1) To analyze the relationship between participation in recreational sports and aspects of quality of life, such as physical, mental, and social health. (2) To identify the recreational sports that each generation in an urban environment is most interested in. (3) Investigate the barriers to participation for each age group. (4) Provide strategic recommendations for the development of inclusive and sustainable recreational sports programs in urban areas. (5) We hope that the results of this study will provide a basis for policymakers, city governments, and community-based organizations to develop evidence-based interventions to improve the quality of life of communities through an intergenerational recreational sport approach.

Quality of life is a multidimensional concept that encompasses physical, psychological, social, and environmental aspects (WHO, 2018). In urban communities, quality-of-life challenges are increasingly complex due to population growth, limited open space, high stress levels, and sedentary lifestyles (Dameria et al., 2023; Profiroiu et al., 2020). In large cities, the number of non-

communicable diseases caused by physical inactivity and social isolation is increasing (Bevilacqua et al., 2022). Therefore, strategies are needed to simultaneously address public health and social issues, one of which is the recreational sports approach. Recreational sport refers to physical activities practised voluntarily for pleasure, relaxation, and health benefits, without competitive pressure (Al Ahmed, 2024). These activities include walking, senior gymnastics, yoga, recreational futsal, and traditional games practised outdoors or indoors. The main characteristics of recreational sports are flexibility in participation, inclusion of all age groups, and non-competitive goals. According to Gao et al. (2021), recreational sport positively affects holistic well-being by incorporating physical, social, and emotional aspects. In addition to improving fitness, recreational sport strengthens social relationships, creates a sense of community, and reduces the risk of depression and anxiety.

Studies show that recreational sport helps to improve cardiovascular fitness, muscle strength, balance, weight, and blood pressure (Zarotis & Tokarski, 2020). Regular recreational physical activity, even at moderate intensity, has been shown to reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease (Anderson & Durstine, 2019). Activities such as cycling, walking in the park, or playing badminton offer an inexpensive and easy way to stay active, especially for urban communities that are pressed for time. In addition to the physical benefits, exercise during leisure time has also been shown to improve mental health. According to Nys et al. (2022), physical activity during leisure time can reduce stress hormone levels (cortisol), improve mood, and increase sleep quality (De Nys et al., 2022). Engaging in green-space activities, such as jogging or practicing yoga in city parks, significantly helps restore mental well-being and reduce stress associated with urbanization (Xu et al., 2024). Recreational sports also offer people the opportunity to have fun, feel successful, and increase self-esteem (Xu et al., 2024). Even in older people, activities such as exercise or walking together have been shown to reduce the risk of dementia and social isolation (Ungvari et al., 2023).

Recreational sports also play an important role in building social cohesion and strengthening relationships among people. Group activities such as grassroots sports, futsal, or public Zumba classes enable interactions across social, cultural, and age boundaries (Moustakas & Robrade, 2023). These make recreational sport a medium for building social capital in urban communities. According to Bazandya et al. (2024), the presence of community-based sports programs in large Indonesian cities can increase citizens' participation in collective activities and strengthen the sense of safety and comfort in the neighborhood. Social interactions in a pleasant atmosphere help to build trust and cooperation between residents (Ba'Zandya et al., 2024).

Age differences across generations affect preferences, motivations, and challenges in sports. Younger generations (Z and millennials) tend to prefer fast-paced, dynamic, technology-based activities such as e-sports, gym workouts with fitness apps, or dance workouts. In contrast, the older generations (X and baby boomers) prefer simple group activities such as morning exercise, walking, and tai chi (Juniawan, 2024). According to Giraudeau et al. (2019), an intergenerational approach to the design of recreational sports programs is important, as each age group has different physical and psychological needs. This underscores the crucial role of policy innovation and program design in including all segments of society. Activities that enable intergenerational participation not only increase physical activity but also strengthen solidarity between people (Giraudeau & Bailly, 2019). Despite the benefits, participation in recreational sports in urban areas is not always easy. Barriers such as a lack of green spaces, high costs of fitness facilities, busy schedules, and a lack of awareness of the importance of physical activity are significant challenges (Perera et al., 2022). Older people, women, and people with disabilities face additional barriers

such as accessibility, safety, and social stigma (Matin et al., 2021). Another factor is the low integration of sports programs into urban policies. Some cities have not included sport in their healthy city development strategy, resulting in limited budget and attention (Dai & Menhas, 2020).

The development of recreational sport cannot be separated from the role of local government policy and support. Municipal governments must provide suitable and safe public spaces for physical activity, such as parks, bike paths, and gymnasiums (WHO, 2018). In addition, it is important to promote community participation through health campaigns, sports cadre training, and incentives for active communities (Guo et al., 2025). According to Dany et al. (2024), Indonesian cities with regular programs such as “Car Free Day” or “group exercise” have been more successful in promoting public participation and creating an active culture. Making recreational sports a part of the urban lifestyle requires cross-sectoral support, including education, health, and spatial planning (Dany, 2024).

Several developed countries have shown that integrating recreational sports into public policy can improve citizens' quality of life. In South Korea, for example, the "Recreation for All" program offers free sports activities in public spaces, with a cross-age and cross-community approach (Ramadhan et al., 2020). In Europe, the WHO's “Healthy Cities” approach is a reference for integrating active spaces, pedestrian-friendly transportation, and physical activity into urban planning. Comparative studies show that the success of these countries is determined by a vision for a healthy city, cross-sectoral collaboration, and citizen participation in the design of programs that meet local needs.

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## METHODS

### *Study Participants*

A cross-generational framework guided participant selection, based on the Pew Research Center's generational model. Participants were categorized into four age cohorts: Generation Z (15–25 years), Millennials (26–41 years), Generation X (42–57 years), and Baby Boomers (58–70 years). A total of 20 participants were purposively selected from diverse professional and social backgrounds in South Jakarta. The city was chosen for its dense population, social diversity, and variety of sports facilities, providing a relevant urban context for studying lifestyle-based physical activity (Dameria & Yudhistira, 2025). Purposive sampling ensured that participants represented a range of experiences and levels of engagement in recreational sport. Eligibility criteria required participants to be residents of South Jakarta and to have regularly participated in recreational physical activities for at least three months prior to data collection (Cook et al., 2020).

### *Study Organization*

This study employed a qualitative, exploratory–descriptive design to examine how recreational sports enhance the quality of life among residents of South Jakarta across different generations. A qualitative approach was deemed appropriate because it allows for an in-depth understanding of subjective experiences, meanings, and social contexts that cannot be captured through quantitative measurement. The design aimed to explore perceptions, motivations, and intergenerational differences in the practice of recreational sport (Hadi & Yudhistira, 2023; Hall & Liebenberg, 2024).

### *Data Collection*

Data collection relied primarily on semi-structured interviews, complemented by brief field observations. The interview guide covered several themes: types and frequency of recreational

activity, individual motivations, perceived physical and psychological benefits, barriers to participation, and intergenerational interaction during leisure sports. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in neutral public settings or via online meetings, depending on participant availability. Each session lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and was audio-recorded with consent. Ethical considerations included voluntary participation, confidentiality of responses, and the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty (Aristyowati et al., 2024; Rahayu et al., 2023).

### ***Statistical Analysis***

The collected data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis, following the procedures outlined by Clarke and Braun (2018). This analytical framework enabled the identification of recurring themes and relationships among generational groups. Coding was performed manually to maintain closeness to the data and ensure interpretive accuracy. Themes were iteratively refined through comparison and discussion to capture both shared and divergent perspectives on recreational sport participation (Clarke & Braun, 2018).

To enhance trustworthiness, the study applied several validation strategies: data triangulation between interviews and observations, peer debriefing, and participant verification to confirm interpretive accuracy. Reflexivity was maintained throughout to minimize researcher bias and ensure transparency in interpretation. Overall, the methodological framework provided a rich, context-sensitive understanding of how recreational sports contribute to urban well-being across generations in South Jakarta.

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## **RESULT**

In this study, 20 people aged 17-60 years, with diverse professional backgrounds, living in South Jakarta, were interviewed. Those interviewed were students, college students, employees, and the elderly. The interviews focused on their leisure-time exercise habits, their perceptions of their impact, and the social and spiritual values they identified.

### ***Type and Duration of Recreational***

Most interviewees stated that they regularly engage in recreational sports, including walking, running, gymnastics, yoga, and futsal. These activities are generally practiced 1-3 times per week, with durations ranging from several months to several years. This shows that recreational sports are part of a lifestyle that has become naturalized in urban communities.

### ***Physical and Psychological Effects***

The majority of respondents reported positive physical changes, including improved physical fitness, increased lung capacity, and better posture. Psychologically, they felt more relaxed, calmer, happier, and less anxious after exercising. This shows that recreational sport not only offers physical benefits but also serves as a means of mental healing amidst the pressures of city life.

### ***The Role of Exercise in Reducing Stress***

Most respondents stated that exercise helped them cope with stress and anxiety. They stated that activity helps them to refresh their minds, relieve the pressures of work or study, and give them time for themselves. For some, exercise is even a healthy escape from stress.



### ***Social and Intergenerational Interaction***

Regarding social aspects, most respondents exercise alone or with peers. However, a few stated that they exercise together with other generations, e.g., parents or children. They described the experience as enjoyable, challenging, and strengthening intergenerational bonds, although this has not yet become a regular habit.

### ***Dimensions of Spirituality***

Some respondents indicated that sporting activities have a spiritual meaning, e.g., awareness of the importance of personal hygiene as a form of gratitude and closeness to God. Others, however, did not explicitly associate sporting activity with the spiritual dimension, suggesting that this meaning is subjective and depends on personal experience.

### ***Perceptions of The Facilities in The Neighborhood***

Reactions to sports facilities in the neighborhood vary. Some people feel that their neighborhood is sporty because it has parks, jogging paths, or access to fitness centers. So many people in South Jakarta do a lot of exercise, not just running but also walking, gymnastics, and more.

### ***Motivation and Message to The Community***

Respondents' primary motivations for exercising regularly are to maintain physical and mental health, improve their lifestyle, build an ideal body, and practice self-care. They provide positive messages for people who are not yet active in exercising, such as: (1) Start with light exercise, (2) Love your body, (4) Fight laziness, (5) Exercise does not have to be long; the important thing is routine.

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## **DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study confirm that recreational sport serves not only as physical activity but also as a multidimensional practice that supports psychological well-being, social integration, and even spiritual awareness. Among participants across four generational cohorts, recreational sports such as walking, yoga, gymnastics, and futsal emerged as the most accessible and sustainable modes of physical engagement in South Jakarta's dense urban context. These results strengthen the argument of Alkatheri et al. (2020) that recreational sport can serve as an inclusive health promotion strategy for urban populations facing time constraints and environmental stressors (Alkatheri et al., 2020).

From a physical perspective, respondents consistently reported improvements in fitness, stamina, and body posture after regular participation. This aligns with McDevitt et al. (2022), who note that consistent moderate-intensity exercise significantly lowers the risk of chronic diseases and enhances cardiovascular efficiency (McDevitt et al., 2022). Interestingly, even light-intensity activities such as walking were perceived to yield meaningful health outcomes, especially among older adults. This suggests that the notion of "sport" should be reframed beyond competitive frameworks toward more sustainable, daily, and voluntary practices embedded in urban living.

The psychological dimension of recreational sport was equally evident. Many participants described exercise as a "mental escape" or "healing ritual" amidst the pressures of city life. These narratives resonate with Toptas and Demirci (2019), who demonstrated that leisure-time physical activity reduces cortisol levels and improves mood stability. For Millennials and Generation Z, recreational sport often served as a coping mechanism for academic or occupational stress. At the

same time, for Generation X and Baby Boomers, it became a therapeutic space for maintaining mental clarity and emotional balance (Toptaş & Demirci, 2019). This generational distinction implies that recreational sport operates not only as a health behavior but also as an adaptive psychosocial tool shaped by age-specific stressors and life demands.

The social role of recreational sport surfaced strongly in intergenerational interactions. Although most participants tended to exercise with peers of similar age, several respondents reported engaging in cross-generational activities such as walking with parents or joining community aerobics with younger relatives. These encounters fostered mutual understanding, patience, and solidarity values that are often eroded in fast-paced urban settings. The findings echo the argument of Fergusin et al. (2019) that intergenerational programs enhance empathy and social cohesion by allowing age-diverse participants to share physical experiences and cultural perspectives. In the context of Jakarta, where social fragmentation and individualism are rising, recreational sport can thus be reinterpreted as a community-building instrument that bridges generational divides (Ferguson et al., 2019).

Another critical insight relates to the spiritual dimension embedded in sport participation. Several participants interpreted their physical routines as an act of gratitude toward life and health, reflecting Clarke and Braun's (2018) argument that bodily awareness cultivated through activities such as yoga can lead to deeper spiritual consciousness (Clarke & Braun, 2018). This indicates that the value of recreational sport transcends instrumental goals such as fitness or appearance—it becomes a practice of self-care, mindfulness, and existential reflection. Such an interpretation resonates with the cultural context of Indonesian society, where spirituality is often intertwined with everyday practices, including movement and communal rituals.

Nevertheless, structural barriers continue to limit equitable participation. Respondents highlighted constraints such as limited green space, overcrowded public parks, safety concerns, and uneven access to affordable facilities, particularly for women and older adults. These obstacles parallel the findings of Khan (2024), who observed that spatial inequality in recreational infrastructure reduces the inclusivity of urban sport initiatives. In Jakarta's context, rapid urbanization has outpaced the development of active public spaces, creating an imbalance between citizens' growing awareness of the benefits of physical activity and the city's inadequate capacity to accommodate it. Addressing these gaps requires integrated urban planning and community-based sports policy that prioritize accessibility and safety (Khan, 2024).

Generational differences also emerged in terms of motivation and engagement style. Younger participants tended to view sport as part of self-improvement and social identity, often mediated through technology and social media. In contrast, older generations valued sport primarily for health maintenance and social connection. This confirms Csala et al.'s (2021) observation that the “I-Generation” in urban Indonesia integrates digital fitness trends into their lifestyle, while older cohorts remain attached to traditional, communal forms of exercise. Recognizing these motivational nuances is crucial for designing sustainable and inclusive recreational programs that appeal to all age groups without reinforcing generational silos (Csala et al., 2021).

From a policy perspective, these insights highlight the need for local governments to reposition recreational sport as a public health and social development priority rather than a leisure by-product. Mubin et al (2015) demonstrated that programs such as “Car Free Day Jakarta” successfully mobilize citizens across age and class boundaries when structured as inclusive, recurring events. Therefore, policymakers should institutionalize similar initiatives with consistent funding, community partnerships, and gender-sensitive approaches (Mubin et al., 2015).

Furthermore, collaboration between educational institutions, health departments, and spatial planning agencies can ensure that recreational sports become integral to urban sustainability agendas, aligning with the WHO (2018) vision of "More Active People for a Healthier World".

The study also underscores the importance of cultural adaptation in promoting sport participation. Unlike Western models of fitness individualism, Indonesian communities often engage in collective physical activities that blend social interaction with leisure. Encouraging this communal ethos could strengthen adherence to regular exercise, particularly among older and less active groups. Recreational sports should thus be designed not only for efficiency or performance but also for enjoyment, belonging, and emotional fulfillment.

In summary, this study extends the theoretical understanding of recreational sport as a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing physical health, psychological resilience, social connectedness, and spiritual meaning. It also offers practical implications for urban governance: equitable access to open spaces, community-based facilitation, and intergenerational inclusion are pivotal to sustaining active lifestyles in metropolitan environments. The findings affirm that when recreational sport is embedded within a culturally resonant and socially inclusive framework, it can function as a transformative force for public well-being and intergenerational harmony in contemporary urban life.

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## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that recreational sport plays a vital, multidimensional role in enhancing the quality of life of urban residents in South Jakarta. Beyond improving physical fitness, it fosters psychological recovery, social inclusion, and spiritual awareness. Activities such as walking, yoga, gymnastics, and futsal offer accessible and enjoyable opportunities that support well-being amid urban stress and limited open spaces. The findings indicate that recreational sport strengthens physical health, emotional balance, intergenerational understanding, and community cohesion by reducing isolation and nurturing cooperation among diverse age groups. Spiritual benefits also emerged, positioning sport as a medium for mindfulness and gratitude.

However, challenges remain, including unequal access to public spaces, time constraints, and limited infrastructure. Thus, policymakers should integrate recreational sport into urban planning through inclusive programs and revitalized community facilities. Ultimately, the study highlights that recreational sport is not merely leisure but a fundamental social necessity that can cultivate healthier, more connected, and resilient communities.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors affirm that there are no conflicts of interest related to the conduct of the research, the authorship process, or the publication of this article.

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#### INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Franciska Dina Dameria;** <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-3584-2359>; franciskamarpaung@gmail.com; Faculty of Sport Science and Health, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia.

**Yasep Setiakarnawijaya;** <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5105-5007>; yasep.s@unj.ac.id; Faculty of Sport Science and Health, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia.

**Ilham;** <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6985-1677>; ilham@fik.unp.ac.id; Faculty of Sport Science, Universitas Negeri Padang, Padang, Indonesia.

**Hadi;** <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4876-8292>; hadi\_pabbsi@mail.unnes.ac.id; Department of Sport Coaching Education, Faculty of Sport Science, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia.

**Asmadi Bin Ishak;** <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-3749-1420>; asmadi@fsskj.upsi.edu.my; Faculty Of Sport Science and Coaching, Sultan Idris Education University, Tanjung Malim, Perak, Malaysia.

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