

Analysis Of Profile and Competence of U19 Football Coaches in Pemalang Regency

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ABSTRACT

Football in Indonesia continues to grow rapidly, as reflected in the increasing number of clubs across various regions, including Pemalang Regency. However, the presence of many clubs has not translated into improved achievements due to the absence of a structured development system. Key issues include limited communication with stakeholders, unstructured training programs, and the lack of qualified coaches capable of designing and evaluating effective training. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The subjects consisted of 48 respondents: 16 administrators, 16 coaches, and 16 players. Data validity was ensured using source triangulation, while analysis was conducted through data reduction and presentation. The findings indicate that coaches generally demonstrate good attitudes during training and matches, but most lack coaching licenses and the ability to design structured programs. Of 16 U19 clubs, only 3 coaches held official licenses and 1 had a youth assistant license. Overall, the results highlight that although coaches show positive behavior, the absence of licensing and structured training knowledge hinders the development of U19 football in Pemalang Regency.

Keywords: Coaches; Football Clubs; Performance; Training Program; Youth Development

INTRODUCTION

Football is one of the most popular sports worldwide, enjoyed by people from diverse backgrounds. In Indonesia, football holds a special position as both a recreational activity and a competitive sport. Almost every Indonesian has engaged with football in some form whether casually for fun or with aspirations for achievement (Games, 2022). This widespread popularity highlights football's role not only as a source of entertainment but also as a means of fostering discipline, teamwork, and national pride.

The success of football development, particularly in youth categories, is closely tied to the quality of human resources. As emphasized by Okilanda et al. (2021), the development of achievement sports relies heavily on the competence of both athletes and coaches. Coaches play a crucial role as trainers and mentors, shaping athletes' technical abilities, character, and motivation. Consistently, Article 25 paragraph 3 of Indonesia's Law No. 3 of 2005 on the National Sports System mandates that sports achievements across regions must be supported through the enhancement of human resources, including qualified coaches.

A coach, therefore, becomes a key determinant of athlete success. According to Rohman (2018), the profile and competence of a coach form the foundation for athletes to reach their potential. A competent coach not only develops players' physical and technical abilities but also cultivates discipline, resilience, and sportsmanship. In football, which is both a performance and developmental sport, coaches are expected to guide players toward excellence while fostering personal growth (Santos & Callary, 2020).

To achieve this, football coaches must possess three core competencies: football insight, encompassing tactical and technical understanding; coaching insight, which covers pedagogy, communication, and training methodology; and management insight, which includes organizational and interpersonal skills (Danurwindo et al., 2017). Alongside these competencies, practical experience is essential for continuous improvement.

Despite football's prominence in Indonesia, the country continues to struggle with establishing a sustainable system for youth development (Akbar et al., 2024). Many regions, including Pemalang Regency, host numerous football clubs but lack structured development systems and qualified coaches. Most coaches rely primarily on personal playing experience rather than standardized licensing or formal training programs. Consequently, the achievements of Indonesian youth football have not matched its widespread popularity.

Globally, there is growing recognition that grassroots football is the foundation of elite performance. Nations with strong football traditions, such as Germany, Spain, and Japan, have built competitive success on the basis of well-trained coaches at the youth level (Rossing et al., 2022). By contrast, Indonesia has not yet maximized its grassroots potential, partly due to the absence of clear pathways for coach education and certification. This research therefore seeks to fill an important gap by examining the profile and competence of U19 football coaches in Pemalang Regency, an area that reflects broader national challenges.

The study is significant for several reasons. First, it provides empirical evidence about the condition of grassroots coaching in a region with high football activity. Second, it identifies discrepancies between expected coaching competencies and field realities, particularly concerning licensing and training program design. Third, it offers policy-relevant insights for football associations, local governments, and academic institutions. Ultimately, this study aims to inform strategies to professionalize coaching at the

grassroots level and, in turn, strengthen Indonesia's long-term football development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Role of Coaches in Youth Football Development

Football has been recognized globally as not only a recreational activity but also a structured developmental platform that shapes the physical, mental, and social growth of young athletes. In Indonesia, youth football development remains an essential priority as it nurtures talents who may eventually contribute to the national team. The role of coaches is widely acknowledged as central in this process, serving as both educators and role models (Rohman, 2018). Coaches influence players not only by teaching technical skills but also by shaping attitudes, discipline, and character (Cholid, 2018).

Internationally, studies have shown that the quality of coaching significantly influences the career trajectories of young athletes. For instance, European academies emphasize structured training guided by licensed coaches, which has been associated with higher success rates of producing professional players (Relvas et al., 2010). By contrast, in developing football contexts such as Indonesia, coaching quality is often constrained by the lack of standardized training programs and limited access to formal certifications (Danurwinto et al., 2017). This gap emphasizes the need to evaluate the competence and profile of local coaches in order to understand their impact on youth player development.

Coaching Competencies and Licenses

Competence in football coaching encompasses three critical areas: football insight, coaching methodology, and management ability (Danurwinto et al., 2017). These areas are reflected in the licensing system developed by the Indonesian Football Federation (PSSI) as well as the Asian Football Confederation (AFC). Licenses range from the basic PSSI D License to the advanced AFC Pro License, each requiring formal training, assessment, and demonstration of competencies.

Globally, coaching licenses have become a benchmark for professionalism in football. In countries like Germany, Spain, and Japan, all youth coaches are required to hold at least a UEFA C or AFC C license. This ensures consistency in player development and aligns grassroots coaching with national football philosophies (Hall et al., 2022). In Indonesia, however, many grassroots coaches rely heavily on personal playing experience and informal training. Research by Okilanda et al., (2021) found that unlicensed coaches often face difficulties in designing systematic training sessions, leading to a reliance on online resources or experiential knowledge.

Beyond licensing, coaching competence also includes ethical behavior, communication skills, and the ability to manage players' psychological needs. According to NASPE (2006, cited in Cholid, 2018), effective coaching requires proficiency across eight domains, including philosophy and ethics, teaching and communication, and evaluation. Without these competencies, even licensed coaches may struggle to maximize youth development outcomes.

Structured Training Programs in Grassroots Football

A key determinant of youth player success is the availability of structured training programs. Well-designed training plans provide balance between physical, technical, tactical, and psychological aspects (Harsono, 2015). Structured programs also ensure progressive development, reducing risks of injury while enhancing long-term player performance.

In the context of Indonesian grassroots football, however, structured training is often absent. A study by Mubarak et al. (2021) observed that many local coaches adopt improvised training plans based on personal playing experiences, rather than evidence-based methodologies. This contributes to inconsistencies in player development and undermines long-term performance.

Comparative studies in Southeast Asia demonstrate that countries such as Thailand and Vietnam have benefited from standardized training frameworks at the grassroots level (Kelly et al., 2022). Their emphasis on licensed coaches and age-specific training modules has resulted in notable improvements in youth international competitions. This suggests that Indonesia's relative underperformance may be linked to the lack of structured training at the grassroots level.

Previous Studies and Hypothesis Development

Several studies have highlighted the importance of coaching competence in youth football development. Rohman (2017) found that early-age football coaches in Indonesia often lack the necessary qualifications, resulting in gaps in both technical and character development of players. Cholid (2018) emphasized the motivational role of coaches, arguing that effective communication and mentorship contribute significantly to athlete performance.

Okilanda et al. (2021) further demonstrated that physical training competence, when combined with appropriate certification, improves the consistency of training programs. Meanwhile, international research by Relvas et al. (2010) concluded that structured academy systems—driven by qualified coaches—are the foundation of success for European clubs. These findings collectively support the hypothesis that coaching competence and licensing are directly correlated with the quality of youth football development.

H1: Licensed football coaches demonstrate higher competence in designing structured training programs compared to unlicensed coaches.

H2: The absence of structured training programs among grassroots football clubs negatively affects youth player development in Pemalang Regency.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the reviewed literature, the conceptual framework of this study links coaching competence and coaching licenses with the quality of training programs, which ultimately influences youth football development outcomes. The framework posits that while positive attitudes and informal experiences may contribute to player motivation, formal licensing and structured training are critical mediators of effective youth development.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach, often referred to as naturalistic research because it is conducted in natural settings without manipulation by the researcher (Sugiyono, 2015). As noted by Denzin and Lincoln (1987, in Moleong, 2018), qualitative research aims to interpret phenomena using multiple scientific approaches in their natural context. This is based on post-positivist philosophy, which views social reality as holistic, complex, and dynamic, with reciprocal interactions among variables (Sugiyono, 2015). In qualitative research, the primary instrument is the researcher. Guba and Lincoln (1981, in Moleong, 2018) emphasized that researchers must have

broad theoretical knowledge and analytical skills to effectively observe, document, and interpret social phenomena. To minimize bias, the researcher must also maintain reflexivity, ensuring that data interpretation reflects respondents' perspectives rather than personal assumptions.

A problem-solving approach was used in this study, combining three main data collection techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted during training sessions and matches, while semi-structured interviews were held with players, coaches, and administrators from each of the 16 clubs. Documentation, including administrative records and training notes (where available), was used to complement primary data. In total, 48 respondents were involved: 16 administrators, 16 coaches, and 16 players.

The research setting was Pemalang Regency, Central Java. Collaboration with the Association of Districts (ASKAB) of the Indonesian Football Association (PSSI) facilitated access to clubs and informants. The main research focus was to examine whether U19 coaches in Pemalang held valid coaching licenses, as well as to assess their competence in designing structured training programs.

To ensure data validity, the researcher applied the principle of trustworthiness through data source triangulation. This involved comparing data across respondent groups (administrators, coaches, players), across different times, and using multiple instruments. Peer debriefing with fellow researchers was also used to validate interpretations.

For data analysis, the framework of Bogdan and Biklen (1982, as cited in [Moleong, 2018](#)) was applied, involving data organization, synthesis, identification of patterns, and interpretation of key findings. The process began with data reduction, in which meaningful units were identified and categorized according to the research objectives. Subsequently, data presentation was conducted through descriptive narratives and tabulation to facilitate systematic interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn by linking empirical findings with theoretical perspectives and previous studies.

This multi-stage process ensured that the findings were not only descriptive but also analytical, providing deeper insights into the competencies, challenges, and practices of grassroots football coaches in Pemalang Regency.

RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the study on the profile and competence of U19 football coaches in Pemalang Regency. The analysis is based on data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation, involving administrators, coaches, and players from 16 U19 football clubs.

Research Objects

The research focused on 16 U19 football clubs in Pemalang Regency (see [Table 1](#)). From each club, three respondents were selected—comprising a player, a coach, and an administrator—resulting in a total of 48 participants. This composition ensured that

perspectives from different stakeholders within the football ecosystem were included, thereby enriching the analysis.

Table 1. Research Object Data

No	Football Club U19	No	Football Club U19
1.	Persera Randudongkal	9.	Pulosari FC
2.	Garuda Perkasa Comal	10.	Persis 86 Sirangkang
3.	Puslat Adidas	11.	Seroja FC Iser
4.	Garuda FC Pagergung	12.	Mitra Selection FC
5.	PSUP Ujunggede	13.	Palapa FC Pelutan
6.	Saber FC Samong	14.	Kuta FC
7.	Kilat Fajar Kedungbanjar	15.	PSPM Pegiringan
8.	PUMA FC	16.	Garuda Hitam Sokawangi

Coaching Licenses

Findings revealed that the majority of U19 football coaches in Pemalang Regency do not hold official coaching licenses. Out of 16 clubs, only four coaches had any form of certification: two with a PSSI D License, one with a PSSI C License, and one with a Youth Assistant License. The remaining 12 coaches did not possess any formal coaching qualifications, citing financial constraints and age limitations as barriers.

Interestingly, administrators reported that while some coaches were motivated to pursue licenses, logistical challenges such as distance to training centers and lack of information about registration often discouraged participation. Players also expressed a belief that being trained by licensed coaches would improve their technical skills and increase their chances of advancing to higher competitions. This reflects a shared recognition across stakeholders of the value of certification, despite its low prevalence.

Competence and Standards

Interviews highlighted that coaches without licenses often relied on personal experiences as former players. While this approach offered practical knowledge, it lacked systematic methodology. Respondents noted that licensed coaches demonstrated greater consistency in delivering training sessions, particularly in balancing technical and tactical drills. However, even licensed coaches were limited by outdated resources and insufficient opportunities for continuous professional development.

The Indonesian Football Coaching Curriculum ([Danurwindo et al., 2017](#)) highlights three core competencies—football insight, coaching insight, and management insight—but these were not widely evident in practice. For example, while most coaches showed enthusiasm in motivating players, few documented training plans or conducted evaluations of player progress. This indicates that coaching competence in Pemalang is more strongly associated with passion and commitment rather than structured professional skills.

Training Program Practices

Another notable result was the absence of written training programs among all observed coaches. Instead, they relied on improvised methods, using online videos or replicating drills from their own playing days. This led to repetitive and unstructured sessions that did not ensure progressive player development. Players interviewed described training as “monotonous” and “less challenging,” suggesting that the lack of structured plans diminished both motivation and skill growth.

Administrators acknowledged this weakness but explained that most clubs operate with

limited budgets, making it difficult to provide formal training resources or send coaches for advanced courses. The absence of investment in training design and documentation has therefore become a systemic issue, not just an individual shortcoming of the coaches.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reinforce existing literature on the importance of coaching competence for youth football development. Consistent with [Rohman \(2017\)](#), many grassroots coaches in Pemalang lack the necessary qualifications to design and deliver structured training programs. This reflects broader systemic weaknesses in Indonesia's football development system.

The shortage of licensed coaches mirrors conditions observed in other developing football nations. For instance, [Kelly et al. \(2022\)](#) reported that Vietnam initially faced similar problems but achieved progress by investing in standardized coach education. Indonesia could benefit from adopting comparable strategies, particularly by expanding access to licensing programs.

A key challenge identified is the absence of structured training programs. As [Harsono \(2015\)](#) argued, program design is fundamental for long-term athlete development. In Pemalang, most coaches relied on ad-hoc methods, leading to inconsistency and limited progression. Such practices hinder holistic player development and increase risks of injury or burnout.

Interestingly, the study also found that coaches, despite lacking licenses, often demonstrated enthusiasm, motivational ability, and commitment. These qualities are valuable but insufficient without technical expertise and systematic methodologies. Effective grassroots development requires both motivational capacity and formal competence.

Another important implication relates to the role of football associations in fostering continuous professional development. Licensing should not be seen as a one-time requirement but as part of an ongoing process of upgrading knowledge and skills. Research in European academies ([Relvas et al., 2010](#)) shows that continuous education through refresher courses and mentorship programs helps coaches stay updated with evolving methodologies. Adopting a similar approach could help Indonesian coaches avoid stagnation and align with international standards.

Furthermore, collaboration with local governments and educational institutions could play a pivotal role in strengthening grassroots football. Municipal sports offices and universities can provide infrastructure, funding, and expertise to support coaching education. This cross-sectoral collaboration would reduce reliance on individual financial capacity, which was highlighted as a major barrier by the respondents.

Overall, the results suggest that while passion and dedication among coaches remain strong, systemic interventions are needed to equip them with the necessary competencies. Without institutional support for licensing, structured training, and ongoing education, the development of youth football in Pemalang and similar regions will remain constrained.

CONCLUSION

This study found that most U19 coaches in Pemalang Regency lack formal licenses, with only four holding official certifications. Although many demonstrated motivational qualities, they lacked the competence to design structured training programs, which constrains youth football development in the region.

The absence of standardized training frameworks has resulted in inconsistent player development, contrasting with international best practices where licensed coaches and structured programs are the norm.

To address these gaps, this study recommends: (1) expanding accessible and affordable licensing programs by PSSI; (2) fostering collaborations between football associations and academic institutions to deliver grassroots training curricula; and (3) establishing competency-based evaluations to ensure coaches meet minimum standards. These steps are essential to elevate the quality of youth football development in Indonesia.

Furthermore, the findings highlight the urgency of treating grassroots coaching as a professional pathway rather than a voluntary activity. By empowering coaches through continuous education, standardized certifications, and institutional support, Indonesia can create a stronger foundation for youth football. Ultimately, improving the quality of coaches will not only enhance player development but also contribute to broader national achievements and the long-term sustainability of football in the country.

LIMITATION

Although this study provides valuable insights, several limitations must be noted. First, the sample was limited to 16 clubs in Pemalang Regency, which restricts generalizability. Broader studies across multiple regions are needed for stronger conclusions.

Second, the reliance on qualitative methods—particularly interviews and observations—introduces subjectivity. Respondents' views may have been influenced by personal experiences or biases. While triangulation helped mitigate this, some degree of subjectivity remains.

Third, the absence of quantitative performance data (e.g., physical test results, match statistics) limited the ability to measure coaching impact objectively. Future studies could integrate mixed-method approaches to strengthen findings.

Finally, contextual factors such as financial constraints, cultural attitudes toward coaching, and regional infrastructure were not explored in depth. These factors likely shaped both licensing availability and training program implementation. Addressing them in future research would provide a more comprehensive understanding.

In addition, this study focused primarily on coach licensing and competence, but did not evaluate the perspectives of national-level stakeholders such as PSSI officials or policy-makers. Including these voices in future research would allow a more holistic analysis of systemic barriers and opportunities for improving grassroots football development in Indonesia.

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DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors have declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning the study, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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