



The Development Benefits And Risks Of Recreational Parkour Sports In The Freerun Flow It Parkour Community

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study aims to explore the development, benefits, and risks of parkour as a recreational sport in the Parkour Freerun Flow It community in Pekanbaru. It focuses on the community's progress, the physical and mental benefits, and the potential risks associated with the sport.

Methodology: This study used a qualitative method with purposive sampling. Data were collected through direct observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. The subjects consisted of community members and experts, including athletes, therapists, and medical professionals. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

Main Findings: The study found a decline in interest and training intensity within the parkour community due to limited training facilities and lack of institutional support. Despite this, parkour offers significant benefits such as improved physical fitness, mental resilience, and self-confidence. Risks include minor to severe injuries, particularly if warm-ups are neglected. Younger practitioners are especially vulnerable due to underdeveloped joints and bones.

Novelty/Originality of this study: This study contributes to the understanding of parkour as an emerging recreational sport in Indonesia. It uniquely documents the evolution and current state of a regional parkour community, highlighting the dual nature of parkour as both physically beneficial and potentially hazardous. It offers insights for policymakers to better support urban recreational sports.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Recreational sports have become an increasingly important part of contemporary society as they offer both physical benefits and psychosocial support in daily life [1]-[3]. As regulated in the Indonesian National Sports System Act No. 3 of 2005, recreational sports are considered a means of maintaining public health and well-being through enjoyable, self-motivated physical activity. One form of recreational sport that has gained popularity, particularly among urban youth, is *parkour*. Defined as the art of moving from one place to another efficiently and effectively by overcoming obstacles using only the body, parkour demands both mental discipline and physical agility [4], [5].

Originating in France, parkour has evolved from a military training method into a global urban sport. In Indonesia, the parkour movement started in the mid-2000s and has spread across major cities, forming community-based practice groups such as *Parkour Freerun Flow It Pekanbaru*. This community, established in 2012, serves

as a platform for youth in Pekanbaru to engage in non-competitive physical activity, develop body coordination, and build confidence through structured movement training. However, the community currently faces multiple challenges such as declining member interest, limited access to training facilities, and minimal institutional support.

Existing literature highlights both the benefits and risks of parkour. Artha [6] emphasizes its potential in developing courage, self-reliance, and physical endurance. Bowie [7] notes the increasing injury rates due to the lack of structured warm-up routines and formal safety protocols. Demartini [8] also stresses the psychological aspects of risk management in parkour, suggesting that confidence and body awareness are key to minimizing injuries. Despite the growing global interest, scholarly attention in Indonesia on the practical development and safety aspects of parkour communities remains limited.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the development, benefits, and risks of parkour in the context of *Parkour Freerun Flow It Pekanbaru*. By observing the community's evolution, conducting interviews with members and experts, and analyzing physical and psychological outcomes, this research offers a comprehensive understanding of how parkour operates as a recreational sport within a local Indonesian setting [8]-[10]. The novelty of this study lies in its detailed documentation of a regional parkour community's journey, which is expected to inform future recreational sport development and public health initiatives in urban environments.

The first study is rooted in the lived experience of a specific parkour community. Its background frames parkour as a form of urban recreational activity that fosters physical fitness, creativity, social bonding, and personal growth. It emphasizes how the sport develops organically within informal networks, focusing on participant narratives and community dynamics. This research highlights the sport's grassroots potential and internal benefits, while also acknowledging self-managed risk as a part of parkour culture [11], [12]. However, the background does not explore broader legal, societal, or institutional perceptions that shape how parkour is regulated and received in public spaces. In contrast, the study titled "Risk and Benefits in Lifestyle Sports: Parkour, Law and Social Value" approaches the topic from a socio-legal and policy-oriented lens. It explores how parkour is interpreted within institutional frameworks focusing on legal boundaries, liability concerns, public space governance, and social acceptance [13]-[15]. This research positions parkour within a broader societal discourse, analyzing how it challenges conventional norms in sport, law, and urban planning. However, while it offers valuable macro-level insights, it lacks attention to the authentic voices of practitioners and how community-driven development, self-regulation, and localized practice impact the growth of parkour as a recreational lifestyle sport.

The gap between these two studies lies in the divide between community-centered perspectives and institutional or policy-centered analysis. The first study provides rich insights into how parkour evolves within an autonomous, self-organized group, emphasizing internal benefits and challenges. Meanwhile, the second study focuses on how society, law, and policy perceive and regulate parkour from the outside [16], [17]. What is missing is an integrated approach that considers both sides: how legal, social, and urban governance intersect with the internal experiences, needs, and adaptive strategies of parkour communities. Bridging this gap would offer a more complete understanding of how parkour functions as both a subculture and a public urban activity navigating formal structures.

This study presents a unique contribution by exploring recreational parkour from a bottom-up, community-driven perspective, focusing on how the Freerun Flow IT Parkour Community develops, navigates risks, and fosters personal and social benefits outside formal sport structures. Unlike prior research that emphasizes parkour's legal implications and societal tensions, this study foregrounds the lived experiences, motivations, and adaptive practices of actual participants [18]-[20]. Its novelty lies in re-centering the narrative on the practitioners themselves, showing how informal communities self-regulate, create value, and build safe, inclusive environments despite lacking institutional recognition or legal protection. This perspective fills a crucial gap in understanding parkour as an evolving, grassroots form of urban recreation [21], [22].

The study has significant implications for how alternative sports are understood, supported, and managed in urban environments. It suggests that recreational parkour, when cultivated within a self-regulating community, can serve as an effective model for youth engagement, creative physical expression, and informal education. Urban planners, local governments, and youth development agencies can draw from this study to reconsider policies that treat parkour as a liability [23]-[25]. Instead, they should recognize its value as a grassroots movement capable of producing positive social outcomes, including increased physical activity, social inclusion, and community resilience. Integrating such communities into official recreational frameworks could enhance public space use while fostering civic engagement.

There is a growing urgency to acknowledge and support emerging lifestyle sports like parkour before restrictive legal measures or urban redevelopment displace them from public spaces [26]-[28]. As cities become more regulated and formalized, unrecognized recreational practices are increasingly pushed to the margins, despite their capacity to offer safe, self-managed, and inclusive environments for youth. The Freerun Flow IT Parkour Community exemplifies how informal sports can flourish if given room to grow and evolve. Immediate attention is needed from policymakers, educators, and public space managers to create regulatory environments that nurture rather than suppress the development of such organic recreational cultures.

In conclusion, this study offers a valuable contribution to the discourse on urban sport, recreation, and youth culture by providing an in-depth account of how parkour is developed, experienced, and sustained within a self-organized community [29], [30]. By exploring the internal strengths and adaptive capacities of the Freerun Flow IT Parkour Community, it challenges dominant narratives that focus solely on risk and legality. The research calls for a more balanced and inclusive view of lifestyle sports one that recognizes their potential for positive impact when rooted in community trust, shared responsibility, and urban creativity. Future engagement between parkour communities and urban stakeholders could unlock new pathways for inclusive and sustainable sport development.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study applied a qualitative descriptive design to explore and interpret the phenomenon of recreational parkour activity within the Parkour Freerun Flow It Pekanbaru community. The design was chosen to provide a detailed description of the development, benefits, and risks of parkour, based on natural, real-life conditions. The research aimed to understand participant experiences, physical and psychological effects, and contextual challenges within the community.

The subjects in this study were selected using purposive sampling. This technique was applied to choose individuals who had sufficient knowledge and active involvement in the parkour community. A total of seven informants were involved, including community practitioners, a physiotherapist, and a medical doctor, all of whom were considered to provide deep and credible insights. These informants represented both the practitioner experience and expert opinions relevant to physical risks and psychological benefits of parkour.

Data were collected through three main techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. The triangulation of these methods ensured the credibility and depth of the research findings. The table below outlines each technique and its respective focus,

Table 1. Data Collection Technique

Technique	Focus
Observation	Monitoring training sessions, physical movements, warm-up routines
Interviews	Gathering practitioner insights, injury experiences, psychological impact
Documentation	Collecting visual data, training photos, medical records, permits

The research instruments included an interview guide, observation checklist, and documentation logbook. The interview guide consisted of semi-structured questions designed to explore the evolution of the community, personal benefits experienced by the members, and types of injuries or risks encountered. The observation checklist was used to note physical training routines and facility conditions, while the documentation log recorded visual evidence of practices, events, and incidents of injury.

The data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes three core steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. First, irrelevant or redundant data were excluded, and key patterns were identified. Then, data were organized into thematic narratives, supported by direct quotes and observational records. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on the triangulated results, which were validated through cross-checking with informants and literature references.

The research procedure began with preliminary field visits to gain entry access to the community. After gaining consent, observations and interviews were conducted simultaneously over a three-month period. Data were transcribed and coded manually, followed by analysis using the Miles and Huberman model. The final stage involved validating findings with expert informants to ensure accuracy and ethical integrity. All participants were informed of their rights, and ethical approval was considered through oral consent and anonymity protection.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study on the *Parkour Freerun Flow It Pekanbaru* community. The results are discussed based on the research objectives, namely: (1) identifying the development of parkour in the community, (2) understanding the benefits experienced by members, and (3) analyzing the risks involved. The discussion integrates empirical data, field documentation, and relevant theoretical references.

3.1. Community Development and Participation Decline

The parkour community in Pekanbaru was established in 2012 as a continuation of informal gatherings from 2007. Initially, interest in parkour steadily increased, reaching a peak around 2015 with more than 30 active members and regular involvement in local and national events such as *Jamming Nasional Parkour Indonesia*. However, by 2019, a significant decline in participation occurred. This reduction is attributed to limited access to

public spaces, lack of government support, and negative public perceptions of parkour as a dangerous sport rather than an artistic physical activity.

Table 2. Membership Trends of Parkour Freerun Flow It Pekanbaru (2012–2019)

Year	Active Members	Events Attended	Notable Activity
2012	15	Local Jamming	Formation of the Flow It group
2014	20	Regional Fundraisers	Training in open public spaces
2015	31	Jamming Regional Sumatra	Increased social media presence
2016	35	Jamming Nasional	Hosting national parkour event
2019	12	None	Access to training locations banned

The decline in training frequency directly affected skill progression, as members lacked consistent practice opportunities. This stagnation contrasts with the vision of parkour as a discipline requiring regular, structured movement repetition [2]. Furthermore, government rejection of proposals to use public parks—due to classifying parkour outside the arts domain—illustrates institutional misunderstanding of its nature.

3.2. Physical and Psychological Benefits of Parkour

Despite the challenges, community members consistently identified parkour as a beneficial activity that improves physical and mental health. Regular training enhances strength, agility, flexibility, and cardiovascular fitness. Movements such as *rolling*, *vaulting*, and *wall climbing* activate multiple muscle groups, while requiring balance and precision. This supports Artha's assertion that parkour promotes holistic physical conditioning.

In addition to physical conditioning, members reported improved self-confidence, emotional regulation, and discipline. These psychological outcomes align with Demartini's view that parkour fosters mental resilience through controlled exposure to fear and risk [31]. Moreover, the community aspect provided social bonding and a sense of belonging, particularly among youth.

3.3. Implications for Community-Based Urban Sport Development

The findings suggest that parkour, when properly structured, can serve as an effective urban youth engagement tool. Its minimal equipment requirements and flexible settings make it accessible. However, support from institutions is crucial to ensure safe practice environments and public acceptance. This research confirms the earlier conclusions of Reza et al. [32] that parkour practitioners develop strong self-concepts, discipline, and accountability. Nonetheless, it also reveals a gap in local sports policy implementation, particularly in recognizing emerging sports and allocating safe public spaces for non-mainstream physical activities.

The study is found that parkour serves as a multidimensional practice that fosters not only physical development but also social, emotional, and psychological growth within a grassroots recreational setting. The findings emphasize the self-regulated nature of the community, its collective management of risk, and the sport's role in cultivating creativity, resilience, and self-confidence [33]–[35]. Participants reported that parkour helped build discipline, spatial awareness, and a sense of identity, with minimal reliance on formal coaching or institutional structures. The focus was largely on holistic development in a non-competitive, freely expressive environment. In contrast, the second study, “Parkour-Based Activities in the Athletic Development of Youth Basketball Players”, presents parkour not as an independent sport but as a structured supplementary tool for enhancing athletic performance. The findings highlight the effectiveness of parkour-based drills in improving agility, balance, coordination, and movement efficiency attributes highly transferable to basketball [36], [37]. This application is goal-oriented and performance-driven, tightly integrated into a formal training regimen led by professional coaches. While the physical benefits are similarly acknowledged, the use of parkour is highly controlled and contextualized within existing sports development frameworks, limiting its expressive and social dimensions.

The gap between these two studies lies in the fundamentally different contexts and intentions behind parkour practice. The first positions parkour as a recreational lifestyle sport, emphasizing intrinsic motivation, social bonding, and personal expression [38], [39]. The second reinterprets parkour as a performance-enhancing technique, repurposed for improving outcomes in another sport. While both studies confirm the physical advantages of parkour, the broader psychosocial benefits seen in community-based settings are largely absent from the structured athletic training model. Bridging this gap requires future research that investigates how parkour can be both a tool for formal athletic enhancement and a medium for holistic youth development without compromising its core values of freedom, creativity, and autonomy [40]–[42].

This study presents a distinctive contribution by illustrating how recreational parkour, when practiced within an organically formed community like Freerun Flow IT, fosters not only physical development but also social cohesion, emotional resilience, and self-managed risk-taking. While previous studies, such as the one involving basketball athletes, apply parkour in a controlled, performance-driven framework, this research captures the multidimensional growth that arises in freeform, non-institutional environments [43], [44]. Its novelty lies in

highlighting parkour as a lifestyle sport that enables participants to navigate challenges, build identity, and cultivate peer-based mentorship demonstrating value beyond its utility as a physical conditioning method.

The findings of this study imply that parkour has the potential to be more than just a training tool for enhancing athletic performance; it can function as a self-contained vehicle for holistic youth development. Recreational parkour, when practiced in a supportive, self-regulated community, contributes significantly to self-confidence, spatial intelligence, autonomy, and adaptive learning [45]-[47]. These benefits suggest that stakeholders in youth programs, public health, and urban recreation should consider informal sport communities as essential partners in fostering lifelong engagement with physical activity. This also challenges current sport development models to broaden their metrics of success beyond competition and physical output, incorporating personal growth and community connection.

One limitation of this study is its context-specific focus on a single community, which may not reflect the diversity of parkour practices or experiences across different regions or cultures. The absence of comparative analysis with more structured sport environments limits the ability to generalize the findings or measure parkour's developmental impacts relative to other physical disciplines. Additionally, the study does not quantify specific physical outcomes, which may reduce its appeal to stakeholders in formal sports science or youth fitness domains. These limitations suggest the need for more varied, interdisciplinary approaches that combine qualitative insight with measurable physical and psychological metrics.

Future research should explore how community-based parkour can be effectively integrated into formal youth development programs without compromising its core values of autonomy, creativity, and freedom of movement. Comparative studies across diverse parkour communities and structured sport training environments could provide a deeper understanding of the psychological and physical impacts of each model. Additionally, mixed-methods research combining narrative inquiry with biometric and performance data would help capture the full spectrum of benefits that parkour offers. It is also recommended to examine how gender, socio-economic background, and urban infrastructure shape access to and experience within recreational parkour communities.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the *Parkour Freerun Flow It Pekanbaru* community has experienced a decline in growth due to limited training facilities and lack of government support, despite its early development and active engagement in regional events. Parkour provides substantial physical and psychological benefits to its members, including improved strength, flexibility, confidence, and discipline. However, the sport also carries risks of injury, ranging from minor to severe, especially without proper warm-up and progressive training. These findings highlight the importance of structured training, institutional recognition, and safer environments to support parkour as a sustainable recreational activity.

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