

Athlete Safeguarding in Indonesian Sport: Reconstructing Legal Protection against Sexual Harassment and Abuse in National Sports Organizations

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Abstract

Athlete safeguarding has become an increasingly important dimension of sports governance, particularly in relation to sexual harassment, psychological abuse, exploitation, and other forms of misconduct within sporting environments. Athletes may face heightened vulnerability because of hierarchical relationships between athletes, coaches, officials, clubs, and sports federations. This article examines the adequacy of legal protection against sexual harassment and abuse within Indonesian sports organizations. Using a normative juridical approach, the study analyzes Indonesian legislation concerning sports governance, sexual violence, employment, child protection, and human rights, alongside international safeguarding principles. The study identifies a regulatory fragmentation in which responsibilities for preventing, reporting, investigating, and remedying abuse may be distributed across multiple institutions without a sufficiently integrated safeguarding mechanism. Internal disciplinary procedures may also create conflicts of interest when allegations concern individuals holding institutional authority. This article proposes a rights-based safeguarding framework emphasizing independent reporting mechanisms, mandatory institutional duties of prevention, victim-centered investigations, confidentiality, protection against retaliation, and effective remedies. The framework further recognizes the heightened protection required for minors and athletes in dependent contractual relationships. Strengthening safeguarding regulation is essential to transform Indonesian sport into an environment that protects athlete dignity, safety, and fundamental rights while ensuring institutional accountability.

[Perlindungan atlet telah menjadi dimensi yang semakin penting dalam tata kelola olahraga, khususnya terkait dengan pelecehan seksual, kekerasan psikologis, eksploitasi, dan bentuk-bentuk pelanggaran lainnya dalam lingkungan olahraga. Atlet mungkin menghadapi kerentanan yang lebih tinggi karena hubungan hierarkis antara atlet, pelatih, ofisial, klub, dan federasi olahraga. Artikel ini mengkaji kecukupan perlindungan hukum terhadap pelecehan dan kekerasan seksual dalam organisasi olahraga]



Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan yuridis normatif, studi ini menganalisis undang-undang Indonesia mengenai tata kelola olahraga, kekerasan seksual, ketenagakerjaan, perlindungan anak, dan hak asasi manusia, bersamaan dengan prinsip-prinsip perlindungan internasional. Studi ini mengidentifikasi fragmentasi regulasi di mana tanggung jawab untuk mencegah, melaporkan, menyelidiki, dan mengatasi penyalahgunaan dapat didistribusikan di berbagai lembaga tanpa mekanisme perlindungan yang terintegrasi secara memadai. Prosedur disiplin internal juga dapat menimbulkan konflik kepentingan ketika tuduhan menyangkut individu yang memegang otoritas kelembagaan. Artikel ini mengusulkan kerangka kerja perlindungan berbasis hak yang menekankan mekanisme pelaporan independen, kewajiban kelembagaan wajib untuk pencegahan, investigasi yang berpusat pada korban, kerahasiaan, perlindungan terhadap pembalasan, dan solusi yang efektif. Kerangka kerja ini selanjutnya mengakui peningkatan perlindungan yang dibutuhkan untuk anak di bawah umur dan atlet dalam hubungan kontraktual yang bergantung. Penguatan regulasi perlindungan sangat penting untuk mengubah olahraga Indonesia menjadi lingkungan yang melindungi martabat, keselamatan, dan hak-hak mendasar atlet sekaligus memastikan akuntabilitas kelembagaan.]

Keywords: Athlete safeguarding, sexual harassment, sports law, athlete rights, institutional accountability

Introduction

Sport is commonly understood as an arena for health, achievement, discipline, and national representation, but the institutional environment in which sport is organized can also generate significant risks to athlete rights. Athletes frequently depend on coaches and administrators for selection, training access, competition opportunities, financial support, medical services, and career advancement. Such dependencies create asymmetrical relationships in which refusing inappropriate conduct may carry perceived or actual professional consequences. International research consequently treats harassment and abuse in sport not simply as individual misconduct but as a governance problem associated with power, hierarchy, trust, and institutional culture (Mountjoy et al. 2016; Gaedicke et al. 2021). A safeguarding approach is therefore broader than criminal prosecution after harm occurs. It requires sports organizations to anticipate risks, establish preventive standards, facilitate safe reporting, investigate allegations independently, protect complainants, and provide appropriate remedies.

Sexual harassment and abuse are particularly difficult to address within sport because sporting relationships frequently involve forms of physical proximity that may be legitimate in training but can also become mechanisms through which personal boundaries are gradually weakened. Coaches may possess extensive

authority over athletes' daily routines, performance evaluation, selection, and career trajectories. Research on coach-athlete relationships identifies power imbalance, closeness, blurred boundaries, grooming, and organizational dependence as important conditions that may facilitate sexual violence (Gaedicke et al. 2021). A systematic review similarly demonstrates that sexual misconduct in sport ranges from verbal harassment and inappropriate comments to unwanted touching, sexualized behavior, grooming, and more serious abuse (Kim 2024). These findings make it necessary to distinguish legitimate coaching practices from conduct that exploits professional authority.

The Indonesian legal system has developed important instruments relevant to athlete protection. Law No. 11 of 2022 concerning Sports regulates rights and obligations, sports actors, sports organizations, governance, supervision, dispute resolution, and sanctions within the national sports system. No. 12 of 2022 concerning Sexual Violence provides a more comprehensive framework for prevention, handling, protection, recovery, law enforcement, and institutional coordination concerning sexual violence. No. 35 of 2014 strengthens protection of children against violence and emphasizes recovery for child victims. These instruments create important legal foundations, but their existence does not necessarily establish a specialized safeguarding architecture for sport.

The problem becomes clearer when sports organizations are considered as institutions with their own disciplinary structures. Internal sports rules can regulate conduct, ethics, selection, and organizational discipline, but they may be inadequate when allegations involve senior coaches, officials, federation administrators, or individuals who influence the careers of complainants. Indonesian scholarship concerning sports governance has emphasized the importance of transparency, accountability, independence, and ethical administration, indicating that athlete protection cannot be separated from institutional governance (Wijaya and Silvana 2020; Widodo and Wirawan 2024). If an organization is responsible simultaneously for receiving complaints, investigating them, determining sanctions, and protecting its reputation, institutional conflicts of interest may arise.

The Indonesian regulatory landscape also demonstrates that sports governance remains dynamic. Government Regulation No. 46 of 2024 replaced Government Regulation No. 16 of 2007 as the principal implementing regulation concerning sports administration and clarifies the roles of central and local government in sports policy, supervision, coordination, and evaluation. Minister of Youth and Sports Regulation No. 14 of 2024 subsequently established standards for the management of achievement-sport organizations, including organizational structure, decision-making, ethical codes, and development, but this regulation was revoked by Ministerial Regulation No. 7 of 2025 because it was considered no longer consistent with developments and needs in sports-organization management. This regulatory movement demonstrates why safeguarding should be

embedded in a durable statutory and institutional framework rather than dependent on a single administrative instrument.

Previous Indonesian scholarship has primarily examined athlete protection through welfare, employment, contractual rights, sports governance, dispute resolution, and general legal protection. Saputra and Tohari (2022) identify weaknesses in the legal protection of sports actors under the earlier sports-law framework, while more recent research continues to identify gaps in welfare and legal certainty under Law No. 11 of 2022 (Yustiana et al. 2024). Studies concerning football players likewise demonstrate that athletes can occupy a legally complex position because their relationships with clubs may involve both sporting regulation and employment law (Safara et al. 2024; Prasetya 2023). These studies are valuable because they establish that athlete protection cannot be reduced to sporting rules alone.

A smaller but increasingly important body of Indonesian research has begun to address violence and sexual violence in sport directly. Research concerning legal protection for athletes against sexual violence by coaches identifies a gap between legal norms and their implementation, particularly where athletes are minors or where coaches exercise substantial authority over victims (Kusnanto, Haryono, and Saefullah 2025). This emerging literature reinforces the need to examine safeguarding as a distinct legal problem. Sexual abuse is not only a criminal-law issue; it is simultaneously an institutional governance problem involving prevention, reporting, evidence, confidentiality, retaliation, disciplinary procedures, and organizational accountability.

International safeguarding principles provide a useful comparative reference for this reconstruction. The International Olympic Committee's consensus statement defines safe sport as an environment respectful of athletes' dignity and free from non-accidental violence, while emphasizing that abuse can be physical, psychological, sexual, verbal, cyber-based, or related to neglect (Mountjoy et al. 2016). The consensus further emphasizes that children, elite athletes, athletes with disabilities, and other groups facing structural vulnerabilities require particular attention. The later IOC safeguarding framework continues this approach by emphasizing prevention, reporting, response, education, and organizational responsibility. Such principles can help translate Indonesia's general legal protections into a sports-specific institutional architecture.

This article contributes to the literature by shifting the analytical focus from the existence of legal prohibitions toward the institutional design of protection. The central argument is that Indonesian law does not suffer primarily from a complete absence of legal norms concerning sexual violence. Rather, the challenge is that applicable norms are distributed among criminal law, sports law, child protection, human rights, employment, disability rights, organizational regulations, and internal disciplinary systems. This distribution can create gaps in responsibility and uncertainty about which institution should act at each stage of a safeguarding case. The article therefore proposes a reconstructed framework based on five

interconnected principles: prevention, independent reporting, victim-centered adjudication, protection against retaliation, and effective remedies.

The study employs a normative juridical approach using statutory, conceptual, and comparative approaches. Primary legal materials consist of Indonesian legislation concerning sports, sexual violence, children, human rights, employment, and disability rights. Secondary materials include Indonesian legal and sports-governance scholarship and international peer-reviewed literature concerning harassment, abuse, coach-athlete power relations, and safeguarding. The analysis is conducted by identifying the functions that a safeguarding system must perform and then assessing whether those functions are adequately connected within the existing Indonesian legal structure. The objective is not to reproduce existing regulations but to develop a coherent model for integrating them.

Regulatory Fragmentation and the Legal Position of Athlete Safeguarding

The starting point for reconstructing athlete safeguarding in Indonesia is recognition that the existing legal system already contains multiple protective norms. Law No. 11 of 2022 regulates the national sports system, including sports actors, organizations, governance, supervision, dispute resolution, and sanctions. Law No. 12 of 2022 establishes prevention, protection, handling, and recovery mechanisms concerning sexual violence. Child protection legislation adds stronger protection where the athlete is under eighteen, while human-rights legislation establishes broader principles of dignity and freedom from discriminatory treatment. The difficulty therefore does not begin with the absence of applicable law. It begins when these regimes must operate simultaneously in one sporting incident.

Legal fragmentation becomes problematic when the same conduct has different institutional classifications. An incident involving unwanted sexual touching by a coach can simultaneously constitute sexual misconduct under an organizational code, potentially a criminal offense, a breach of professional obligations, and a violation of the athlete's rights. Each legal characterization may activate different procedures and standards. The criminal system may focus on establishing the elements of an offense, while an internal disciplinary process may examine professional misconduct. A safeguarding system, by contrast, must immediately address safety, confidentiality, psychological support, and prevention of further contact. Without coordination, the existence of several mechanisms can paradoxically make protection less predictable.

The Sports Law provides a general institutional foundation but does not by itself function as a detailed safeguarding code. Its regulatory architecture covers sports management, actors, organizations, supervision, dispute settlement, and sanctions, reflecting a comprehensive approach to national sports governance. Yet a general sports statute cannot reasonably be expected to prescribe every procedural safeguard required in cases of sexual harassment and abuse. The critical

legal question is therefore whether subordinate regulations and organizational rules translate general duties into specific procedures. Indonesian scholarship on sports governance suggests that the quality of governance depends upon transparency, accountability, and effective institutional controls rather than merely the existence of formal organizational structures (Wijaya and Silvana 2020).

The enactment of Government Regulation No. 46 of 2024 is relevant because it replaced the earlier Government Regulation No. 16 of 2007 and establishes the contemporary framework for implementation of the Sports Law. Its emphasis on government coordination, supervision, and evaluation provides a basis for treating athlete safety as a governance responsibility rather than solely an internal matter. The importance of this approach is that sports organizations operate within a regulated public-interest environment. When government financing, national representation, athlete development, and public sporting facilities are involved, the state has a legitimate interest in ensuring that institutional practices meet minimum standards of safety and rights protection.

The temporary existence of Minister of Youth and Sports Regulation No. 14 of 2024 illustrates both the potential and instability of administrative regulation. The regulation addressed standards for achievement-sport organizations, including organizational structure, decision-making, ethical codes, and development. Such provisions are conceptually relevant to safeguarding because ethical codes and governance standards can provide organizational mechanisms for preventing misconduct. However, the regulation was subsequently revoked by Ministerial Regulation No. 7 of 2025 because it was considered no longer suitable to contemporary organizational needs. [Peraturan.go.id](https://peraturan.go.id)¹ Safeguarding protections should consequently not depend exclusively on temporary administrative arrangements.

Sexual violence legislation provides a stronger rights-based foundation because Law No. 12 of 2022 explicitly addresses prevention, victim protection, recovery, law enforcement, and institutional coordination. This is significant for sports because traditional disciplinary systems tend to concentrate on whether an accused person violated organizational rules. A victim-centered safeguarding system begins with a different question: what measures are necessary to ensure the victim's safety, dignity, access to support, and ability to participate in proceedings without further harm? The Sexual Violence Law therefore offers principles that can be incorporated into sports-specific procedures.

The child-protection framework becomes especially important because many athletes enter structured training environments before reaching adulthood. Law No. 35 of 2014 reinforces the state's responsibility to protect children from violence and emphasizes physical, psychological, and social recovery. The sporting environment can create additional dependency because young athletes may live away from parents, travel with coaches, or depend on adults for training and selection. Child safeguarding in sport must therefore recognize not only the age of the athlete but also the institutional conditions that increase dependency.

Employment law provides another layer of protection for athletes whose relationship with clubs or organizations constitutes an employment relationship. Law No. 13 of 2003 regulates equal treatment, employment relationships, protection, welfare, supervision, and sanctions, although its contemporary application must be read alongside subsequent amendments. Indonesian scholarship on football players has demonstrated that athletes may possess worker-like legal characteristics and may need employment-law protection when disputes arise with clubs (Safara et al. 2024; Prasetya 2023). This matters for safeguarding because contractual dependency can intensify an athlete's reluctance to report abuse.

The human-rights framework adds a normative foundation that should prevent safeguarding from becoming merely a matter of organizational reputation. Law No. 39 of 1999 recognizes the importance of human-rights protection within the Indonesian legal order. An athlete remains a rights-bearing individual even when participating in a highly regulated performance environment. Consequently, selection decisions, disciplinary measures, training practices, and organizational policies must be assessed against principles of dignity, equality, and protection from degrading treatment. The sporting objective of maximizing performance cannot justify institutional practices that compromise fundamental rights.

Disability rights require an additional layer of analysis. Law No. 8 of 2016 guarantees equality of opportunity, protection, accessibility, and reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities. The IOC has similarly recognized athletes with disabilities as a group that may face heightened vulnerability to harassment and abuse (Mountjoy et al. 2016). A safeguarding system that provides only standard reporting channels may therefore fail disabled athletes if those channels are inaccessible. Protection must include accessible communication, appropriate assistance, and procedures that recognize different forms of dependency.

Indonesian research concerning athlete welfare reinforces the broader conclusion that formal legal recognition does not necessarily guarantee effective protection. Yustyana et al. (2024) find that Law No. 11 of 2022 does not automatically resolve all welfare problems affecting athletes, particularly in relation to long-term protection and post-career security. Saputra and Tohari (2022) similarly identify limitations in the legal protection of athletes under the previous sports-law framework. These findings are relevant to safeguarding because they demonstrate a recurring institutional problem: legal rights can exist at the normative level while remaining difficult to exercise without clear procedures, responsible institutions, and accessible remedies.

The central weakness of regulatory fragmentation is therefore not necessarily contradiction between laws but the absence of a clearly designated safeguarding architecture. When an athlete reports abuse, the system should be able to answer five immediate questions: who receives the complaint, who protects the athlete, who investigates, who decides disciplinary consequences, and how the victim

obtains legal and psychological support. If the answers depend entirely on the internal structure of each federation or club, protection will vary substantially. Good governance requires predictable institutional standards that apply regardless of the identity or status of the alleged perpetrator.

A reconstructed legal framework should therefore treat safeguarding as a cross-cutting obligation connecting sports law with sexual-violence law, child protection, employment, human rights, and disability rights. The purpose is not to replace criminal justice or existing disciplinary mechanisms but to establish clear coordination among them. International safeguarding research supports this multiagency approach, emphasizing collaboration among athletes, coaches, sports managers, health professionals, educators, and criminal-justice institutions (Mountjoy et al. 2016). Indonesian law already provides many of the substantive components; the major task is to connect them into an operational system.

Power Relations, Institutional Dependency, and the Need for Independent Reporting

The second major issue concerns the social structure of sport. Abuse cannot be adequately understood without considering the unequal power relations between athletes and the adults or institutions controlling their sporting careers. Coaches can influence selection, playing time, access to competition, training opportunities, recommendations, and professional advancement. Sand et al. (2011) demonstrate that authoritarian coaching behavior can reinforce power asymmetry and create conditions in which sexual harassment becomes more likely. The significance of this finding for Indonesian sports law is substantial: safeguarding mechanisms must account for power, not merely conduct.

The coach-athlete relationship also involves legitimate forms of intimacy and physical interaction. Training can require physical correction, medical assistance, performance feedback, and close communication. This makes simplistic rules based solely on physical contact inadequate. Gaedicke et al. (2021) show that the difficulty lies partly in the overlap between necessary closeness and opportunities for boundary violations. A safeguarding framework should therefore establish professional boundaries without treating all forms of coach-athlete proximity as suspicious. The goal is not to eliminate trust but to prevent trust from becoming a mechanism for exploitation.

Grooming is particularly important because sexual abuse may develop through gradual boundary testing rather than sudden violence. The coach or other authority figure may first establish unusual emotional closeness, preferential treatment, private communication, or secrecy. Over time, these behaviors can normalize increasingly inappropriate conduct. Research on elite child athletes indicates that abuse can become normalized within intensive sporting environments, particularly when athletes perceive their coach as central to their

identity and future success (Wilinsky and McCabe 2021). Safeguarding rules must therefore recognize patterns of conduct before they culminate in criminal acts.

The performance culture of elite sport can intensify this vulnerability. Athletes may be taught to tolerate physical pain, obey authority, accept intense training, and prioritize team objectives. Such values can be beneficial when applied responsibly, but they can also make it difficult for athletes to identify inappropriate treatment. Mountjoy et al. (2016) note that cultures of secrecy, deference, and athlete idolization can facilitate abuse. The legal implication is that consent and compliance should not be evaluated without considering institutional power. A subordinate athlete's apparent cooperation may not reflect genuine freedom when refusal could threaten a career.

The issue becomes more acute when the alleged perpetrator controls information about the athlete's future. A coach may influence recommendations, competition selection, scholarship opportunities, or access to national teams. An athlete who fears exclusion may reasonably conclude that reporting misconduct is professionally dangerous. Indonesian research on athlete employment and contractual dependency supports the broader recognition that athletes may lack bargaining power when dealing with clubs and organizations (Safara et al. 2024). Safeguarding therefore requires institutional guarantees against professional retaliation.

Internal reporting channels are particularly problematic when the alleged perpetrator occupies a powerful institutional position. If a coach is also closely connected to federation leadership, an athlete may reasonably doubt the neutrality of an internal investigation. The existence of a complaint mechanism is therefore insufficient. The mechanism must be perceived as independent, confidential, accessible, and capable of acting against senior officials. International safeguarding principles emphasize leadership responsibility and systematic prevention rather than reliance on informal organizational discipline (Mountjoy et al. 2016).

Independence does not necessarily mean that every complaint must immediately leave the sports organization. Rather, there should be a clearly established external or structurally independent pathway for cases involving conflicts of interest, senior officials, repeat allegations, minors, or serious sexual violence. The Canadian Safe Sport model, for example, separates reporting and investigative functions from ordinary sports-organization management. Governo do Canad⁶ Such comparative models demonstrate how institutional independence can reduce conflicts of interest and strengthen confidence in the process.

Confidentiality must accompany independence. Athletes may avoid reporting because they fear that their personal information will become public, that teammates will stigmatize them, or that organizational leaders will identify them as problematic. A safeguarding system should therefore establish strict rules concerning who may access complaint information and under what circumstances information can be disclosed. Confidentiality should not be understood as secrecy

that prevents accountability; rather, it protects the complainant while allowing competent authorities to conduct an appropriate investigation.

Protection against retaliation is equally important. Retaliation may take direct forms, such as threats, dismissal, loss of selection, reduced training opportunities, or disciplinary punishment, but it may also occur indirectly through reputational damage and exclusion from professional networks. An athlete-dependent system is particularly vulnerable to such forms of retaliation because career progression often depends on recommendations and relationships. A reconstructed Indonesian safeguarding framework should therefore create a presumption that adverse treatment following a good-faith report requires institutional scrutiny.

Minors require additional protection because their ability to understand and resist institutional power may be limited. Law No. 35 of 2014 emphasizes children's right to protection from violence and the need for recovery after victimization. International safeguarding research similarly identifies children and adolescents as particularly vulnerable because of developmental dependence and the intensity of elite training environments (Wilinsky and McCabe 2021). For Indonesian sport, this means that consent-based reasoning should never substitute for child-protection duties where legally protected minors are involved.

Athletes with disabilities also require reporting systems adapted to their circumstances. Law No. 8 of 2016 establishes obligations concerning equality, protection, accessibility, and reasonable accommodation. If a reporting process requires inaccessible digital forms, assumes independent communication, or fails to provide appropriate assistance, formal availability does not equal substantive accessibility. Safeguarding must therefore incorporate disability-sensitive procedures, including accessible communication formats, trusted support persons, and reasonable accommodation throughout investigation and adjudication.

The same principle applies to athletes in economically dependent relationships. Contractual dependency can make athletes reluctant to challenge clubs because losing a contract may mean losing income, housing, medical support, or opportunities for advancement. Indonesian research concerning wage disputes and contractual protections shows that athletes may already face significant vulnerability in their relationships with clubs (Prasetya 2023; Safara et al. 2024). Safeguarding must therefore be linked to labor and contractual protection so that reporting abuse does not expose athletes to disproportionate economic harm.

Independent reporting also improves institutional accountability because it produces information that organizations cannot easily suppress. When complaints are handled entirely internally, organizations may have incentives to minimize incidents to protect reputation. Widodo and Wirawan (2024) identify transparency and accountability as important components of sports justice and governance. A safeguarding system should consequently require reporting statistics, institutional response standards, and oversight without compromising the confidentiality of

individual victims. Accountability should measure not only the number of sanctions imposed but also whether organizations prevent recurrence.

The appropriate institutional model is therefore a **multi-channel reporting architecture**. Athletes should be able to report to trained safeguarding officers, independent external bodies, law-enforcement institutions where criminal conduct is alleged, and victim-support services. These pathways should not compete with one another; they should be coordinated. The IOC consensus specifically recommends a multiagency approach involving sports organizations, medical professionals, educators, and criminal-justice agencies (Mountjoy et al. 2016). For Indonesia, institutional coordination would reduce the risk that a complaint becomes trapped within the organization where the alleged abuse occurred.

Reconstructing a Rights-Based Safeguarding Framework for Indonesian Sport

A reconstructed safeguarding framework should begin with prevention rather than waiting for abuse to occur. Prevention requires sports organizations to identify risks associated with coaching, accommodation, travel, medical treatment, digital communication, selection processes, and one-on-one interactions. The IOC consensus emphasizes that prevention must address structural and cultural conditions rather than focusing exclusively on identifying individual perpetrators (Mountjoy et al. 2016). In Indonesia, prevention should consequently become an explicit governance obligation imposed on federations, clubs, training centers, and other organizations receiving public recognition or resources.

A preventive framework should require every relevant sports organization to adopt a safeguarding policy based on nationally applicable minimum standards. Such a policy should define sexual harassment, sexual abuse, grooming, retaliation, psychological abuse, bullying, neglect, and other forms of maltreatment. The definitions should be sufficiently clear for athletes to recognize prohibited behavior while preserving legitimate coaching and medical practices. Kim's systematic review demonstrates the diversity of sexual misconduct in coach-athlete relationships, making narrow definitions inadequate (Kim 2024). A comprehensive policy should therefore cover both contact and non-contact conduct.

Education is the second preventive pillar. Coaches, officials, medical staff, administrators, and athletes should receive regular training concerning professional boundaries, consent, communication, grooming indicators, reporting procedures, confidentiality, and retaliation. Training should not be a one-time certification requirement. It should be incorporated into continuing professional development and linked to eligibility to occupy positions of authority. International safeguarding initiatives emphasize education and awareness as central components of safe-sport systems. The Indonesian framework should similarly treat safeguarding competence as part of professional responsibility.

Recruitment and accreditation also require reform. Sports organizations should conduct appropriate screening of individuals who will work closely with athletes, particularly minors. Screening cannot guarantee that abuse will never occur, but it reduces avoidable risks and signals that safeguarding is part of organizational due diligence. More importantly, disciplinary information should not disappear when coaches move between clubs or federations. A person subject to credible safeguarding restrictions should not be able to circumvent institutional controls simply by moving to another organization. This requires lawful information-sharing protocols that protect due process and privacy.

The reporting mechanism should be designed around accessibility rather than organizational convenience. Athletes should be able to report through multiple channels, including confidential digital systems, trained safeguarding officers, independent institutions, and designated support services. Reporting should not require an athlete to confront the alleged perpetrator or disclose the complaint to the person's immediate supervisor. The design should also accommodate minors, athletes with disabilities, athletes with limited literacy, and athletes who fear losing their position. A rights-based system measures accessibility by whether vulnerable athletes can realistically use it.

Victim-centered investigation should become a core procedural principle. This means that the process must recognize the potential psychological and professional consequences of repeated questioning, forced confrontation, public exposure, or unnecessary disclosure. Victims should receive information about the process, access to support, and reasonable protection while investigations proceed. Law No. 12 of 2022 provides a broader legal basis for handling, protecting, and recovering the rights of victims of sexual violence. Sports organizations should therefore develop procedures that complement, rather than undermine, those protections.

A victim-centered approach does not mean abandoning procedural fairness for accused persons. A credible safeguarding system must protect both the integrity of the investigation and the rights of all parties. Allegations should be assessed through competent procedures, evidence should be preserved, and decisions should be based on established standards. This is especially important because poorly designed systems can create both under-enforcement and unfair disciplinary action. The appropriate solution is not to weaken safeguarding but to professionalize it through trained investigators, clear procedures, conflict-of-interest rules, and independent review.

Confidentiality should be accompanied by evidence-preservation protocols. Digital messages, emails, photographs, training records, travel arrangements, medical records, and other relevant information may become important in safeguarding investigations. Sports organizations should establish lawful procedures for preserving evidence while respecting privacy and data-protection requirements. This is increasingly relevant because coach-athlete relationships may extend into private messaging applications and social media. The IOC's recognition

of cyber-based mechanisms of abuse demonstrates that safeguarding must extend beyond physical sporting spaces (Mountjoy et al. 2016).

The framework should also separate safeguarding decisions from sporting-performance decisions where possible. An athlete who reports misconduct should not automatically lose selection or training opportunities simply because the allegation creates organizational inconvenience. Where temporary separation is necessary to protect an athlete, the default should be to minimize adverse consequences for the complainant rather than treating the complainant as the source of disruption. This principle follows the broader logic of victim protection in sexual-violence law and prevents organizational responses from reproducing the harm that discouraged reporting in the first place.

Institutional accountability should extend beyond individual perpetrators. If an organization ignored previous complaints, failed to supervise high-risk environments, discouraged reporting, or retaliated against athletes, institutional responsibility may exist even when criminal responsibility cannot be established against the organization itself. Good sports governance requires accountability for systems as well as individuals. Indonesian scholarship on sport governance identifies transparency, accountability, and ethical management as important dimensions of institutional justice (Wijaya and Silvana 2020; Widodo and Wirawan 2024). Safeguarding should become one of the concrete areas through which these governance principles are measured.

An effective framework also requires independent oversight. A national safeguarding body or a structurally independent unit could establish minimum standards, receive complaints, conduct or commission investigations, monitor organizational compliance, and publish anonymized statistical reports. Such an institution would not replace criminal justice or internal sports discipline. Instead, it would fill the institutional gap between them. The comparative rationale is clear: the Canadian model, for example, assigns independent responsibility for receiving reports, initiating investigations, and administering sanctions under its safe-sport framework. *Governo do Canadá*

Remedies must extend beyond punishment. An athlete affected by sexual harassment or abuse may require psychological assistance, medical services, legal support, temporary relocation, educational continuity, financial assistance, or protection from further contact with the alleged perpetrator. The concept of recovery in Law No. 12 of 2022 provides a useful basis for this broader understanding of remedy. Sports organizations should therefore be required to establish referral systems and, where appropriate, financial or institutional support for victims. A disciplinary sanction alone cannot restore an athlete's dignity or career.

Special attention should be given to minors and athletes in dependent relationships. Child athletes should have access to trusted adults outside the immediate coaching hierarchy, while athletes who depend economically on a club should not be forced to choose between reporting abuse and maintaining basic

livelihood. Employment protections become relevant here because athlete contracts may involve wages, accommodation, insurance, medical care, and other benefits. Indonesian research concerning contractual disputes confirms the significance of legal protection in athlete-club relationships (Safara et al. 2024). Safeguarding therefore requires integration between sports law and employment protection.

The final component is monitoring and continuous evaluation. A safeguarding system cannot be considered effective merely because an organization has adopted a policy. Effectiveness should be assessed through indicators such as training coverage, accessibility of reporting channels, response time, conflict-of-interest safeguards, investigation quality, protection against retaliation, victim-support access, and recurrence rates. Anonymous athlete surveys should complement administrative statistics because underreporting is likely when athletes distrust institutions. Research on sport abuse repeatedly demonstrates that organizational culture affects disclosure, meaning that quantitative case counts alone cannot measure safety (Gaedicke et al. 2021; Wilinsky and McCabe 2021).

The proposed model can therefore be conceptualized as a rights-based safeguarding chain: prevention, safe access, independent reporting, protective response, fair investigation, institutional accountability, and meaningful remedy. Each element depends on the others. Prevention without reporting leaves hidden misconduct unaddressed. Reporting without independence can reproduce conflicts of interest. Investigation without victim protection can cause secondary harm. Punishment without institutional reform allows abuse to recur. Remedy without accountability can individualize what is actually a structural governance failure. The Indonesian legal system already contains substantial normative resources; reconstruction should focus on integrating these resources into one coherent institutional architecture.

Conclusion

The analysis demonstrates that the principal challenge facing athlete safeguarding in Indonesia is not the complete absence of legal protection but the fragmentation of applicable legal regimes and institutional responsibilities. Sports law, sexual-violence law, child-protection law, human-rights law, employment law, and disability law each provide relevant protections, but they do not automatically form a coherent safeguarding system. Law No. 11 of 2022 establishes the contemporary foundation of national sports governance, while Law No. 12 of 2022 significantly strengthens the legal framework for preventing and responding to sexual violence. Nevertheless, the athlete may still encounter uncertainty about where to report, who will investigate, how retaliation will be prevented, and which institution is responsible for providing recovery and remedy. The central legal reconstruction therefore requires coordination rather than simply the creation of additional prohibitions.

The proposed rights-based framework places institutional responsibility at the center of safeguarding. Sports organizations should be required to prevent abuse, establish accessible reporting mechanisms, manage conflicts of interest, protect complainants, conduct fair investigations, and provide effective remedies. Independent oversight is particularly important when allegations involve coaches, officials, federation administrators, or other actors capable of influencing athletes' careers. International research consistently identifies power asymmetry, organizational culture, blurred boundaries, and institutional dependence as important conditions underlying abuse (Mountjoy et al. 2016; Gaedicke et al. 2021). Indonesian governance scholarship similarly emphasizes transparency and accountability as essential characteristics of legitimate sports institutions (Wijaya and Silvana 2020; Widodo and Wirawan 2024). Safeguarding should therefore be treated as an essential element of sports governance rather than an optional ethical initiative.

Future research should move beyond doctrinal analysis toward empirical examination of how Indonesian athletes actually experience reporting and institutional response. Studies should investigate the prevalence of sexual harassment and abuse across different sports, the reporting behavior of athletes, the treatment of complaints by federations and clubs, and the experiences of minors, women, disabled athletes, and athletes in economically dependent relationships. Comparative research could also assess different models of independent safeguarding institutions and determine which institutional design best fits Indonesia's decentralized sports system. Longitudinal research is particularly necessary to evaluate whether organizations change their practices after complaints and whether athletes experience meaningful protection against retaliation. Such research would provide the empirical foundation necessary to transform safeguarding from a normative aspiration into a measurable and enforceable component of Indonesian sports governance.

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