

MAPPING SPORT TALENT PROFILES AMONG FEMALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS BASED ON STANDARDIZED IDENTIFICATION TESTS

Lucy Pratama Putri¹, Risky Syahputra², Uswatul Hasanah Umar³,
Devaron Suardi⁴, Arief Khalid Mawardi⁵

Universitas Mulawarman^{1,3,4,5}, Universitas Negeri Padang²
lucypratamaputri@fkip.unmul.ac.id, riskys@fik.unp.ac.id,
uswatulhasanahumar@fkip.unmul.ac.id, devaronsuardi@fkip.unmul.ac.id,
ariefkhalidmawardi@fkip.unmul.ac.id

Abstract

This study was motivated by the absence of scientific data concerning the sport talent profiles of female elementary school students in Clusters I, II, and III of the City of Payakumbuh. The lack of objective talent mapping has the potential to hinder the effectiveness of early-age sport development programs. Accordingly, this study aimed to describe the results of sport talent detection tests administered to children aged 7–12 years in the form of sport recommendations aligned with their physical characteristics. A descriptive research design was employed, involving 186 female students from several elementary schools grouped into three clusters. The instrument utilized was the SEKORA sport talent detection test, which comprises three principal components: anthropometry (height and body mass), motor coordination (eye–hand coordination, jumping sideways, moving sideways, balance beam/walking backward, and shuttle throw), and physical performance (10 × 5 m shuttle run, endurance shuttle run, sit-and-reach, shoulder rotation, standing broad jump, curl-up, and knee push-up). Field measurement data were entered into the web-based SEKORA system and automatically processed using machine learning algorithms to generate individualized sport recommendations. Data were analyzed descriptively using percentage distributions. The findings revealed that across the seven categories of sport recommendations, all were predominantly sports that emphasize flexibility as a primary physical component. The respective dominance percentages from the first to the seventh recommendation were (1) 50%; (2) 62.90%; (3) 48.39%; (4) 53.23%; (5) 55.38%; (6) 54.84%; and (7) 54.30%. These results indicate that flexibility constitutes a prominent biomotor component among female students aged 7–12 years in the study area. In conclusion, the Sport Search (SEKORA)-based talent identification system is effective in objectively mapping sport talent tendencies and can serve as a foundational framework for planning early-age sport development programs aligned with children’s developmental characteristics and the principles of long-term athlete development.

Keywords: Talent Detection; Sport Search

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Correspondence Author: Lucy Pratama Putri, Universitas Mulawarman, Indonesia.

E-Mail: lucypratamaputri@fkip.unmul.ac.id

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INTRODUCTION

Sport plays a strategic role in human resource development, particularly in the domains of health, character formation, and achievement. In the context of competitive sport development, the processes of early talent identification and

development constitute key determinants of long-term athlete success (Syahputra et al., 2023). Countries with advanced sport systems have implemented systematic talent identification programs to ensure that children's potential is directed toward sports aligned with their physical and motor characteristics. In Indonesia, however, early-age sport development continues to face substantial challenges, particularly in the implementation of scientifically grounded talent mapping.

Demographically, the population of elementary school students in Indonesia is large and widely distributed across regions. This condition should serve as a primary asset for identifying and developing future athletic potential. Nevertheless, empirical realities indicate that only a relatively small proportion of elementary students attain sporting achievements at regional, national, or international levels. The disparity between the large school-age population and the relatively low level of sporting achievement suggests fundamental weaknesses within the development system, particularly at the initial stages of talent identification and allocation.

One of the principal issues in early-age sport development is the suboptimal implementation of individualized and objective talent identification processes. In practice, children's selection of specific sports is often influenced by coincidence, temporary interest, or environmental factors, without adequate consideration of the alignment between a child's physical characteristics and the specific demands of a given sport (Crane & Temple, 2015). Previous studies emphasize that athletic talent results from the interaction among genetic factors, environmental influences, and structured training processes (Semenova et al., 2023; Till et al., 2025; Till & Baker, 2020). Therefore, talent identification processes that are not grounded in valid measurement and empirical data may hinder long-term athlete development.

Numerous previous studies have examined sport talent identification and detection among school-age children. Several have underscored the importance of measuring biomotor components such as strength, speed, endurance, agility, and flexibility as a basis for sport talent mapping (Xiang et al., 2022). However, many of these studies have not provided precise, individualized sport recommendations.

The resulting recommendations tend to be general or group-based, thereby limiting their applicability within individualized development systems that characterize modern sport training.

Moreover, a considerable proportion of sport talent identification research in Indonesia has focused on adolescent or secondary school populations, despite extensive literature suggesting that talent identification should commence during childhood (Abbott et al., 2005). The age range of 7–12 years represents a critical phase in motor development, during which children consolidate fundamental movement skills and exhibit high physical adaptability (Freitas et al., 2015; Mukherjee et al., 2017; Newell, 2020). Accordingly, talent mapping within this developmental window is considered more effective in supporting long-term athlete development.

Girls aged 7–12 years possess distinctive developmental characteristics, both physiologically and motorically. Several studies indicate that prepubescent girls tend to demonstrate relative advantages in flexibility and coordination compared to boys. These characteristics imply potential suitability for sports requiring flexibility, balance, and refined motor control. Therefore, talent identification approaches capable of objectively and systematically capturing these characteristics are necessary.

One widely utilized method for sport talent identification is Sport Search, known in Indonesia as SEKORA. This method is designed to map children's sport potential based on anthropometric measurements and physical performance indicators relevant to the demands of various sports. According to Abbott and Collins, effective talent identification systems must generate sport recommendations aligned with individual profiles and be readily applicable within educational and early-age sport development contexts (Jung, 2022; Pion, 2017). In this regard, the Sport Search method offers advantages due to its practicality, objectivity, and reliance on measurable data.

The City of Payakumbuh, as one of Indonesia's regions, possesses substantial potential for early-age sport development, considering its elementary school population and support for physical education and sport activities. Nevertheless, limited research has specifically mapped the sport talent profiles of girls aged 7–12 years in this region using a comprehensive scientific approach. Such information is essential as a foundation for sustainable regional sport development planning.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to map the sport talent profiles of girls aged 7–12 years in Payakumbuh using the Sport Search method. The study is expected to provide a more accurate representation of individual sport talent tendencies and to generate sport recommendations aligned with children's physical and motor characteristics. Thus, the findings are anticipated not only to contribute to the advancement of sport science, particularly in the field of talent identification, but also to offer practical implications for various stakeholders.

Practically, the findings are expected to serve as references for physical education teachers, coaches, sport administrators, and policymakers in designing more targeted early-age sport development programs. Furthermore, the talent mapping conducted in this study is expected to support the more effective implementation of the Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) framework, thereby enabling children's potential to be developed optimally and sustainably toward future sporting achievement.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive research design aimed at describing the results of sport talent detection tests administered to children aged 7-12 years, specifically in terms of sport recommendations aligned with their physical characteristics in the City of Payakumbuh in 2025. The study involved a sample of 186 female students drawn from several elementary schools grouped into three school clusters. Each participant was assessed using the SEKORA sport talent detection test, which comprises three main components: (1) anthropometric measurements (height and body mass) (Mardiansyah et al., 2024; Nadia et al.,

2023); (2) motor coordination tests, including eye–hand coordination, jumping sideways, moving sideways, balance beam/walking backward, and shuttle throw (Faber et al., 2016; Pion, 2015; Syahputra et al., 2025) ; and (3) physical performance tests, consisting of the 10 × 5 m shuttle run, endurance shuttle run, sit-and-reach, shoulder rotation, standing broad jump, curl-up, and knee push-up assessments (Bakhtiar et al., 2023; Robertson et al., 2018; Wazir et al., 2018).

All field data were subsequently entered into the SEKORA website and processed automatically through a machine learning system, which generated individualized sport recommendations for each participant. The presentation of demographic data including recommended sports, age distribution, and school cluster grouping was conducted using descriptive statistical analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study targeted the population of elementary school students in the City of Payakumbuh, with a total of 186 participants included in the sample. The demographic characteristics of the participant group are presented below to provide a comprehensive overview of the sample background.

Table 1. Sampel Demography

School group	N	%
Gugus I	78	42,2%
Gugus II	75	40,1%
Gugus III	33	17,6%
	186	100,0%
Age		
7 - 8	11	5,9%
9 - 10	114	61,5%
11 - 12	61	32,6%
	186	100,0%

Based on the results of data analysis using the SEKORA talent detection instrument, this study successfully formulated strategic recommendations for early-age athlete development. Seven priority sports were identified as demonstrating the highest levels of suitability for students aged 7–12 years in the City of Payakumbuh, with the aim of optimizing long-term athletic performance and achievement.

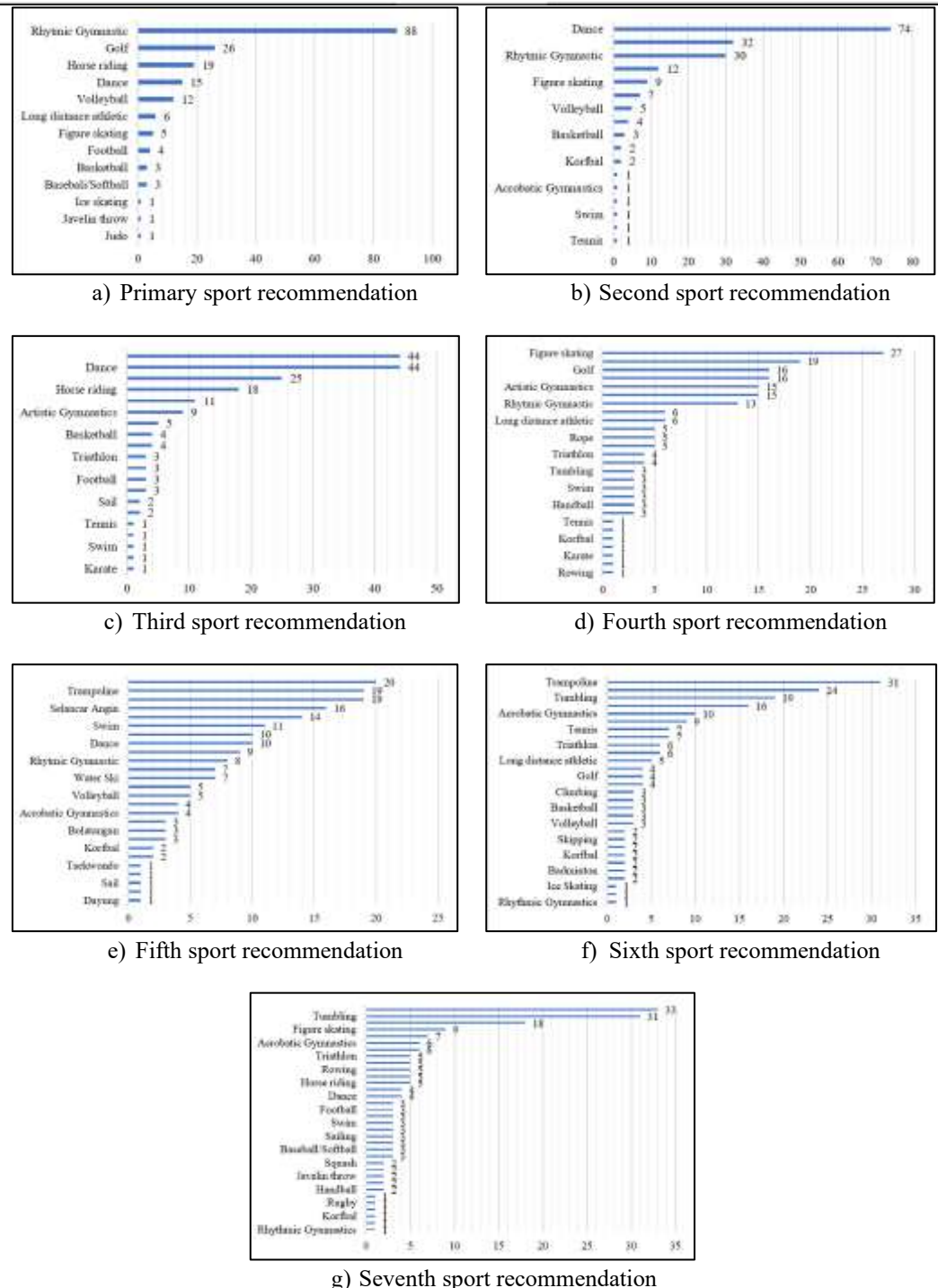


Figure 1. Seven sport disciplines were recommended for each child based on the results of the SEKORA talent identification assessment

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the sports recommended to the participants were predominantly those requiring a high degree of flexibility, such as gymnastics, figure skating, tumbling, and trampoline. This result suggests a strong alignment between the physical developmental characteristics of girls aged 7–12 years and the biomotor demands of these sports, particularly flexibility as a key determinant of early performance.

From a developmental perspective, the age range of 7–12 years represents a critical phase in child growth, characterized by a high adaptive capacity of the musculoskeletal system (Calcaterra et al., 2022; D’Anna et al., 2024; Faienza et al., 2023; Hou et al., 2025). According to Gallahue, Ozmun, and Goodway, children at this stage are in the maturation phase of fundamental movement skills, during which joint flexibility and muscle elasticity remain at optimal levels (Liang et al., 2025). This condition provides a biomechanical advantage in executing movements with a wide range of motion, enabling children to demonstrate superior performance in activities demanding high flexibility. This was reflected in the sport talent detection results of the present study, where flexibility-related indicators achieved relatively high scores.

The high performance in flexibility components can also be explained from a physiological standpoint. Prior to puberty, children’s connective tissue structures remain relatively pliable and have not yet undergone increased stiffness due to hormonal changes. Scholars have identified pre-pubescence as a sensitive period for flexibility development, during which such potential is more readily observable in physical performance assessments (Donti et al., 2022; Ren et al., 2026). Therefore, it is unsurprising that the sports recommended through the Sport Search method in this study tended toward artistic and acrobatic disciplines that heavily depend on flexibility.

These findings are consistent with previous research indicating that children under 12 years of age generally demonstrate favorable levels of flexibility. Earlier

studies have identified flexibility as one of the most dominant biomotor components during childhood (Opstoel et al., 2015), although it tends to decline if not systematically trained in subsequent developmental phases (Donti et al., 2022). Accordingly, early sport talent identification directing children toward flexibility-based sports may provide long-term developmental advantages within athlete training pathways.

Beyond flexibility, sports such as gymnastics, tumbling, and trampoline also require high levels of coordination, balance, and body control. Coordinative abilities develop rapidly during childhood and serve as a fundamental basis for mastering complex motor skills (Eime et al., 2013; Payne & Isaacs, 2024). Children who demonstrate high scores in these components possess greater potential for success in technically demanding and precision-based sports. Therefore, the talent mapping results in this study reflect not only superiority in a single biomotor component but also broader motor readiness.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that the participants possess considerable potential to develop into professional athletes in the recommended sports, provided that appropriate training interventions are implemented. Such interventions should be progressively structured and aligned with the child's chronological age and biological maturation level. During childhood, emphasis should be placed on fundamental motor skill development and sport exploration prior to more intensive specialization (Côté et al., 2020; Goodway & Robinson, 2015; Platvoet et al., 2018; Putri et al., 2026).

Within the framework of long-term athlete development, the Sport Search (SEKORA) talent detection method applied in this study demonstrates strong relevance to the Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model. The LTAD framework underscores the importance of aligning an athlete's developmental stage with appropriate training content and sport selection (Balyi et al., 2013; Pichardo et al., 2018; Till et al., 2022; Varghese et al., 2022). Despite involving relatively simple procedures conducted in a single testing session, the SEKORA method

effectively generated sport recommendations consistent with participants' physical profiles and test outcomes. This provides advantages in terms of time efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and ease of implementation within school and early sport development settings.

Another strength of sport mapping using the Sport Search method lies in its objective and data-driven nature. Abbott and Collins assert that effective talent identification systems should integrate physical and motor measurements to support informed developmental decision-making (Bonney et al., 2020; Jung, 2022; Layton et al., 2023; McEwan et al., 2024; Till & Baker, 2020; Travassos et al., 2018). In this study, the mapping results not only generated sport recommendations but also provided a foundation for designing more targeted and individualized training programs.

Nevertheless, the findings must be interpreted dynamically. High flexibility at ages 7–12 represents an early potential that must be appropriately managed to prevent decline during pubertal biological changes. Therefore, sport recommendations generated through the Sport Search method should be accompanied by periodic evaluation and sustained developmental approaches to ensure optimal progression of identified talents.

Overall, this discussion confirms that sport talent profile mapping among girls aged 7–12 years using the Sport Search method effectively identifies a tendency toward sports requiring high flexibility. These findings are consistent with motor development theory, previous empirical studies, and LTAD principles, and they carry significant implications for the development of more effective and sustainable early-age sport development systems.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the Sport Search (SEKORA) talent identification system is capable of objectively mapping sport talent tendencies among girls aged 7–12 years in the City of Payakumbuh. Across the seven recommended sports ranging from the first to the seventh

recommendation all were predominantly sports that emphasize flexibility as a primary physical component. These findings underscore that flexibility represents a prominent biomotor component within the 7–12-year age group. Therefore, it is recommended that sport stakeholders utilize these mapping results as a foundation for planning early-age sport development programs that are aligned with children’s developmental characteristics and the principles of long-term athlete development.

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