

# **An Exploration of Visitor Activity and Public Space Utilization in Taman GOR at PALU City**

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## **Abstract**

*This research explores the activities and behaviors of visitors and the use of public open spaces in Taman GOR at Palu City using a qualitative approach and naturalistic methods. Public open spaces such as city parks play a vital role in supporting the social life, recreation, and welfare of urban communities. However, the utilization of Taman GOR at Palu City has not been optimal due to obstacles such as lack of cleanliness, lack of supporting facilities, and inadequate parking arrangements. It is important to conduct this research to understand visitors' needs and offer solutions that can improve the park's function as an inclusive public space. This research aims to identify visitor motivations, evaluate the condition of facilities, and analyze the role of the park in supporting the social and recreational life of the community. The results show that the park is used for various activities such as sports, socializing, and recreation, reflecting the physiological and social needs of visitors. However, a number of existing constraints affect the level of user comfort and satisfaction. Taman GOR at Palu City has great potential as an inclusive and multifunctional public space, but it requires improved management through facility improvements, technology integration and community engagement. This research provides important insights for the development of public spaces in urban environments, particularly in creating spaces that support sustainable community welfare.*

**Keywords:** *Public Open Space, Visitor Activities at Taman GOR Palu, Sustainability of Public Space*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Public open spaces play a very important role in the lives of urban communities. City parks, as a form of public open space, function not only as a place for recreation but also as a place to exercise and socialize. Palu City has one of the most well-known city parks, Taman GOR. With its strategic location and various facilities, this park is the main destination for various activities, both individual and group.

However, the utilization of Taman GOR at Palu City has not been fully optimal. Based on observations and interviews, a number of problems were found that affect visitor comfort. Some of them are the lack of maintenance of facilities such as sports equipment and toilets, the lack of cleanliness of the park area, and the lack of supporting facilities such as prayer rooms, chairs, and lighting at night. In addition, other obstacles include inadequate parking arrangements, which often interfere with sports activities such as jogging. The lack of awareness of visitors in keeping the park clean is also an issue that needs attention. These problems not only impact the visitor experience but also hamper the park's potential as a comfortable and inclusive public space.

This research is important to do to understand the behavior and needs of visitors in utilizing public open spaces. Using a qualitative approach with naturalistic methods, this research is expected to provide deep insights into how visitors use the park, the constraints they face, and how the park can be better developed. This study is relevant in the context of developing public spaces that not only fulfill functional needs but also support social interaction and the welfare of urban communities.

Departing from this background, this study formulates three main problems. First, what are the motivations of visitors in utilizing Taman GOR at Palu City? Second, how do visitors assess the condition of the facilities and the obstacles they face while doing activities in the park? Third, what is the role of Taman GOR at Palu City in supporting the social and recreational life of the community?

In an effort to answer these questions, this study aims to identify the motivation of visitors in utilizing Taman GOR at Palu City, evaluate the condition of facilities and constraints faced, and explain the role of this park in supporting the social and recreational life of the community. By understanding visitor behavior and needs, the results of this study are expected to serve as a foundation for the management and development of Taman GOR at Palu City as an inclusive, comfortable, and sustainable public space.

## **II. THEORETICAL BASIS**

### **1. Characteristics of Public Spaces**

Habermas (1989) introduced the concept of public space as a place for inclusive social discussion and interaction. In the context of urban parks, public space becomes a means by which people from various backgrounds can gather, share ideas, and interact in an egalitarian manner. This theory is relevant in understanding how Taman GOR at Palu City functions as a space that supports social cohesion in urban communities.

In the study of public space, the relationship between physical and non-physical elements becomes an important aspect that determines the quality and function of a space. Trancik (1986), through his theory of solid and void, offers an in-depth perspective in understanding how these elements shape the experience of space. This theory illustrates that urban space is composed of two main elements: solid as a physical mass that includes permanent buildings or structures, and void as an open space that provides opportunities for human activity.

In the context of urban parks Whyte (1980) highlights the importance of elements such as accessibility, comfort, and sustainability in the design of public open spaces. Accessibility ensures that open spaces are accessible to all, including children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Comfort includes factors such as the availability of seating, shaded areas, and protection from extreme weather. Sustainability emphasizes the use of environmentally friendly materials, integration of vegetation, and management of resources such as water and energy. In the context of Taman GOR, these elements are key to creating a positive experience for visitors. For example, clear and accessible pedestrian paths, adequate green spaces, and facilities such as seating and lighting can support a variety of activities and community needs, from sports to social interaction, while maintaining environmental sustainability.

Trancik (1986) explains that solid elements serve as physical barriers and visual markers. The mass of buildings, monuments, or supporting structures in a park creates a spatial identity while determining the flow of movement. In contrast, void elements consisting of green open spaces, plazas, or pedestrian paths provide spaciousness and flexibility, allowing visitors to move, socialize, or simply enjoy the atmosphere. Trancik also emphasizes the importance of a balanced proportion between solids and voids. A good public space not only provides attractive aesthetics but also offers optimal comfort and function. Solid elements provide a sense of protection and structure, while void elements provide freedom and connection with the surrounding environment. In parks, this harmony is seen in the interaction between large open green areas and supporting structures such as seats, paths or gathering spaces that create a dynamic rhythm of space. This theory of solid and void provides a strong conceptual foundation in designing inclusive, aesthetic and functional public spaces. In the context of parks, these elements should be designed with user needs, accessibility, and spatial identity in mind, creating spaces that are not only visually beautiful but also socially meaningful.

### **2. Park Visitor Behavior and Activities**

Referring to Gehl (2011) emphasizes the importance of understanding user behavior to create functional and attractive public spaces. Activities in public spaces can be grouped into three main categories, namely social, optional, and necessity activities. This theory helps evaluate the main activities in public spaces such as Taman GOR, including sports, culinary, or leisure activities, to ensure the design of public spaces meets the needs of its users. Meanwhile, Maslow (1943) introduced a hierarchy of human needs, ranging from physiological needs to self-actualization. In the context of urban parks such as Taman GOR, public spaces can fulfill basic needs such as fresh air and sports activities, as well as social needs such as interactions between individuals. This theory provides insight into the motivation of visitors in utilizing public spaces.

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) developed a user satisfaction theory that evaluates the gap between expectations and actual experience. In this study, the theory is applied to analyze the comfort level of visitors and how they rate the facilities available at Taman GOR.

Proshansky, Ittelson, and Rivlin (1970) explored the relationship between human behavior and the physical environment. In the context of Taman GORs, physical elements such as pedestrian paths, playgrounds, and sports facilities were analyzed to understand how they affect visitor behavior and experiences. Barker (1968) stated that the physical environment has a direct influence on human behavior. This research uses this theory to analyze how park elements, such as shady trees, seating, and sports facilities, influence visitor behavior patterns and preferences.

Goffman (1959) highlights the importance of social interaction in public spaces. Taman GORs serve as interaction spaces where visitors can meet, talk and build social networks in a relaxed and inclusive atmosphere.

Furthermore, Torkildsen (2005) emphasizes that recreation is an important necessity in everyday life. Taman GORs provide a space for people to rest, relax and unwind, thus contributing to the balance of daily life. McHarg (1969) pointed out the importance of environmentally friendly and sustainable open space design. In the context of Taman GOR, this theory provides guidance for developing park management strategies that involve ecological sustainability.

Diener (1984) defines subjective well-being as the level of individual happiness in public spaces. Taman GOR can be analyzed to understand its impact on visitors' mental and emotional well-being through recreational experiences and social interactions. Putnam (2000) highlights the role of public spaces in building social networks. Taman GORs are places that support social connectivity through community activities and activities that encourage togetherness. Imrie and Hall (2001) suggest that the design of public spaces should be inclusive and accessible to all, including people with disabilities. This theory is relevant in evaluating the accessibility of facilities and infrastructure in Taman GOR.

Rolph (1976) states that a sense of belonging to a place affects a person's attachment to the space. Taman GOR can be analyzed as an element that creates identity and a sense of attachment of the people of Palu City to their public space. Folke et al. (2004) define urban resilience as the ability of public spaces to adapt to social and environmental changes. The Taman GOR can be evaluated to ensure its sustainability and adaptability to the evolving needs of the community.

### **III. RESEARCH METHODS**

This study used a qualitative approach with naturalistic methods to explore visitor behavior and utilization of public space in Taman GOR at Palu City. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is in accordance with the research objectives that focus on an in-depth understanding of visitors' behavior, motivations, and experiences. With naturalistic methods, research is conducted in a natural environment without researcher intervention, allowing for holistic and authentic disclosure of phenomena.

#### **1. Research Approach and Methods**

A qualitative approach was used to explore complex descriptive data, including visitor motivations, evaluations of facilities, and the dynamics of social interactions in the park. The naturalistic method was chosen because this research requires direct observation at the site to capture visitors' activities and their interactions in real situations. The combination of these approaches allowed the researcher to understand visitor behavior in the full social and environmental context of the park.

#### **2. Research Design**

This research design uses an exploratory approach to deeply understand the behavior of visitors to Taman GOR at Palu City. The exploratory design allowed researchers to explore unstructured data, such as social interaction patterns, routine activities, and evaluation of park facilities. With this design, data was collected through a combination of methods, such as in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. The steps in the research design include:

- 1). Determination of Research Focus:  
Focuses on visitor behavior, facility utilization, and constraints faced.
- 2). Identification of Respondents:  
Respondents were purposively selected to cover various categories of visitors, such as by time of visit (morning, afternoon, evening) and type of activity undertaken.
- 3). Data Collection:  
Using a qualitative approach to obtain detailed and in-depth information.
- 4). Data Analysis:  
Identifying the main themes that emerged from the collected data.

#### **3. Reasons for Choosing the Method**

##### **1). Public Space Context**

Research conducted in public open spaces requires methods that can describe the dynamics of social interaction and visitor behavior naturally. Naturalistic methods allow researchers to capture situations and behaviors contextually, according to the real conditions in the field.

##### **2). Focus on Visitor Perceptions and Experiences**

Using in-depth interviews, this approach helps researchers understand visitors' motivations, perceptions, and evaluations of park facilities. This method also provides the flexibility to explore the unique experiences of each individual.

##### **3). Uniqueness of Data**

Since visitors have diverse backgrounds and purposes in utilizing the park, this approach allows extracting information that is not limited to rigid categories, as in quantitative approaches.

4). Use of Participatory Observation

Direct observation in the field can capture the spontaneous activities of visitors, such as social interactions, facility use, and group dynamics. This data provides information that cannot always be obtained through interviews alone.

5). Relevance to Theoretical Concepts

The theories used in this research, such as Environmental Psychology and Behavior Setting Theory, emphasize the importance of understanding the context of the physical and social environment. This approach is relevant for capturing these elements in depth.

**4. Research Procedure**

1). Data Collection

- In-depth Interviews: Researchers conducted interviews with park visitors to understand their motivations, types of activities undertaken, constraints faced, and their perceptions of park facilities.
- Field Observation: Researchers observed visitors' activities at various times (morning, afternoon, and evening) to understand their behavior patterns and social interactions.
- Documentation: Researchers documented activities in the park through photographs and field notes to support the observations.

2). Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed using a thematic approach to identify patterns and main themes. This analysis involved grouping the data based on the findings of the interviews, observations, and documentation.

3). Data Validation

Validation was done through data triangulation, by comparing findings from interviews, observations, and documentation. This aims to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the research results.

Data collection was conducted on Saturday, December 21, 2024, in the morning (07.00-08.30), afternoon (13.00-14.30) and evening (16.30-18.00), each lasting 1 hour and 30 minutes. In collecting the data, the researcher obtained 29 respondents who were grouped into teenagers and children <20 years old and adults >20 years old.

**Table 1: Respondent Data**  
**Source: Field Data**

Variabel Responden	Percentage	
<b>Time</b>	Morning 07.00-08.30	28%
	Afternoon 13.00-14.30	34%
	Afternoon 16.00-18.00	38%
<b>Age</b>	Teens and Children <20 years old	55%
	Adults >20 years old	45%
<b>Motivation</b>	Sports	48%
	Recreation, Play and Snacks	41%
	Social Interaction (Discussing)	10%
<b>Occupational Choice</b>	Sculpture Area	17%
	Amphitheater	10%
	Seating Area	21%
	Basketball Court	3%
	Skateboarding Area	3%
	Outdoor Fitness	10%
	Road and Pedestrian as Jogging Track	17%
	Food Court	17%

Number of Respondents: 29 People

With this approach and method, this research is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the behavior of visitors to Taman GOR at Palu City, while providing a basis for the development and management of inclusive and sustainable public spaces.

**IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

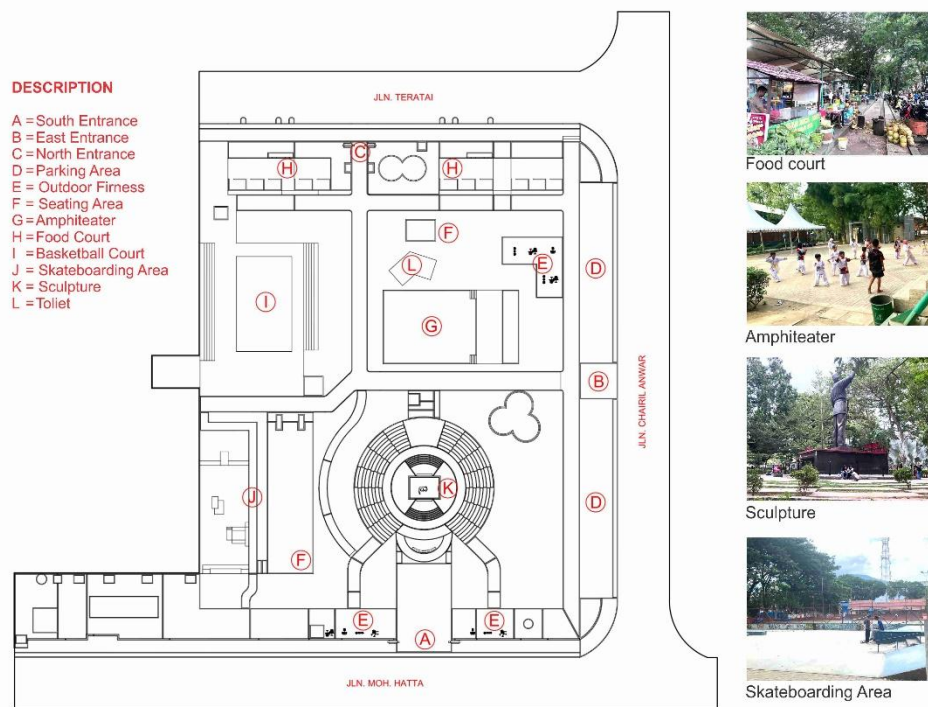
**1. Overview of Taman GOR Location**

Taman GOR (Gelora Olahraga) at Palu City Park is one of the important public spaces that functions as a green open space that provides a place for people to exercise, socialize, and do outdoor activities. Available facilities include a basketball court, takraw court, gymnastics area, skate board area, outdoor fitness, and a sitting area for relaxing. In addition, the presence of food courts adds to the attractiveness of the park as a place for family

recreation. The vegetation that grows around the park also plays a role in creating a cool environment, improving air quality, and providing important ecological benefits to the city.

The park is not only a recreational space, but also has historical value attached to the development journey of Palu City. Originally, the park was built in the 1980s as a major sports facility for the community. Its main focus was to provide sports facilities such as a soccer field and other supporting facilities. However, along with the development of the city and the increasingly diverse needs of the community, the Palu City government developed this park into a multifunctional public space. This transformation occurred in the early 2000s, when pedestrian paths, green open spaces and recreational facilities were added to attract visitors from various backgrounds.

The dynamics of the use of Taman GOR shifted after the earthquake and tsunami that struck Palu City on September 28, 2018. The damage that occurred to several facilities due to the earthquake became a challenge for the sustainability of this park. The revitalization process was carried out by repairing damaged infrastructure and adding new elements to support post-disaster needs. Now, the park is back as a safe and comfortable space for the community, with a broader function as a place for recreation, sports, and social interaction. A situation map that can serve as an overview of Taman GOR is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Existing Condition of Taman GOR**  
Source: Field Data

However, a number of obstacles still hinder optimal utilization of the park. One prominent issue is the damage to the toilet facilities, which have not been fully repaired, making it difficult for visitors to access basic needs while in the park. In addition, the absence of a jogging track is a significant drawback for people who want to exercise running, especially for those who expect a safe and comfortable track.

Limited seating is also another challenge. The available seating areas are insufficient to accommodate the increasing number of visitors, especially on weekends or during certain events. Visitors who come with families or groups often find it difficult to find a place to relax. On the other hand, outdoor fitness facilities that are actually designed for adult fitness are often used as play areas for children, which can pose a safety risk to both children and the original users of the facility.

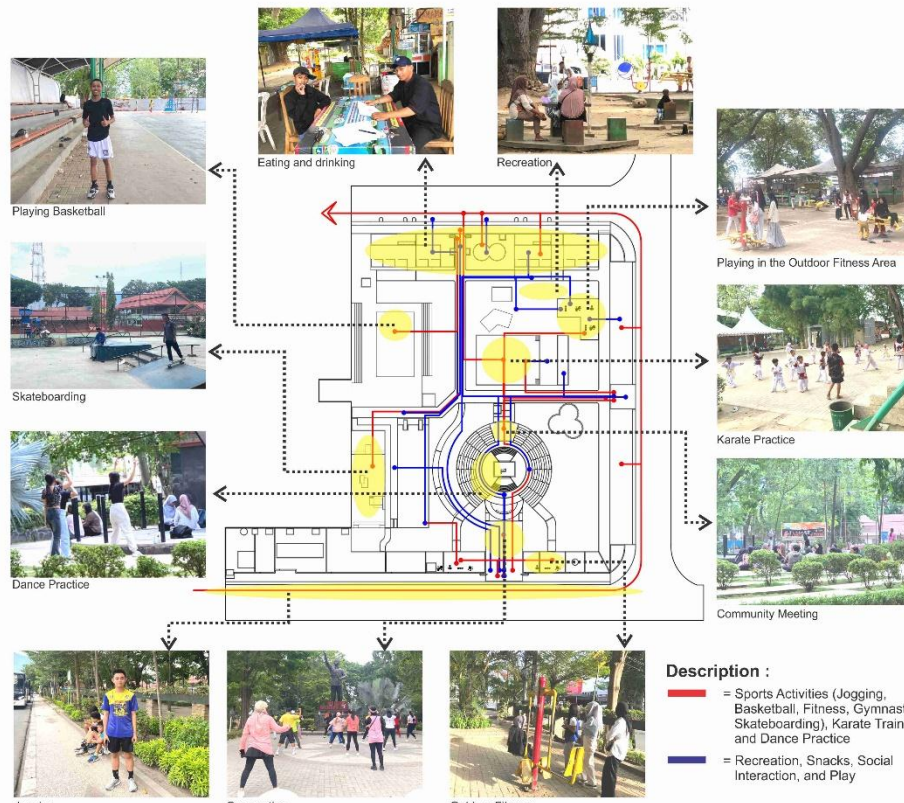
In addition, the takraw field, which is one of the sports facilities in this park, seems to be underutilized. The field is often empty or only used occasionally, reflecting a lack of interest or promotion of the sport among the community. This condition shows that there is untapped potential to maximize the function of the field.

Despite these challenges, Taman GOR remains a vital public space for the people of Palu. Addressing these issues, such as improved toilets, additional jogging tracks and seating, and better management of the facility, could further enhance the park's appeal and usefulness as an inclusive, multifunctional public space.

**2. Visitor Activities in Utilizing Space**

The results show that visitors to Taman GOR at Palu City utilize this public space for various needs, such as sports, socializing, and recreation. As a park that serves a variety of visitor needs, their character in utilizing this space provides a broad picture of the role of urban parks in supporting quality of life. Park visitors come from various ages and backgrounds, ranging from teenagers to adults, who have diverse purposes, such as exercising, relaxing, playing, or gathering with the community. Their motivations are not only driven by recreational needs but also to maintain health, seek inspiration, or simply enjoy the soothing green atmosphere.

In the morning, the park is dominated by physical activities such as jogging, gymnastics, and other light sports. In contrast, the afternoon is used for leisure activities such as relaxing at playgrounds or enjoying local snacks. In the afternoon, the atmosphere of the park becomes more dynamic with the presence of communities holding joint activities, such as dance practice, karate, and other team sports. This diversity shows that the park is not only a place for recreation, but also a place for inclusive social and cultural activities. The location of visitor activities and venues is shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2: Visitor Activities, Circulation and Venues of Taman GOR**  
Source: Field Data

Interactions between visitors reflect the diversity of Palu's society. Some visitors enjoy social interactions, whether through lighthearted greetings to joint community activities. However, others prefer to focus on personal activities, especially among teenagers. This pattern of interaction indicates how public spaces can be a medium of social connection, although the level of social participation may vary.

Although Taman GOR has many advantages, there are a number of constraints perceived by visitors. Damaged facilities, lack of seating, poor hygiene, and unoptimized spatial layout are challenges that must be overcome. Vehicles that park carelessly on the jogging track or the lack of nighttime lighting are obstacles to visitor comfort. In addition, awareness of cleanliness is also an important issue, given the amount of garbage that is not handled properly. Activities, venues and constraints are summarized in Tebel 1.

**Table 2: Visitor Activities**  
Source: Field Data

Activities	Activity Venue	Age Category	Who to Come With	Obstacles
Jogging	Sidewalks and Roads	Teens, Adults	Alone, Friends	Disturbing Vehicle Parking

<b>Gymnastics</b>	Open Field	Adults	Community	Cleanliness is not maintained
<b>Skateboarding</b>	Skateboarding Area	Teens	Friends	Damaged facilities
<b>Relax</b>	Sitting Area	Child, Adolescent, Adult	Self, Family	Lack of seating
<b>Basketball</b>	Basketball Court	Teens	Community	Lack of maintenance
<b>Dance Practice</b>	Large Area of the Park	Teens	Community	Lack of lighting
<b>Karate Practice</b>	Community Area	Adults	Community	Lack of training facilities
<b>Eating and drinking</b>	Food Court	Child, Teen, Adult	Family	Dirty and broken toilets

Number of Respondents: 29 People

In a broader context, Taman GOR represents the importance of green spaces in the city center. Not only does the park serve as a place of relaxation, it also has a positive impact on the physical and mental health of the community, while supporting environmental sustainability by providing a soothing green space. As an inclusive space, the park symbolizes harmonious social interaction, where different age groups and backgrounds can mingle.

However, to fulfill its potential as an ideal public space, better management is needed. The addition of facilities, such as clean toilets, night lighting, extra chairs, and adequate play areas, will enhance the park's appeal. Technology can also be utilized, for example by providing free Wi-Fi or park apps that make it easier for visitors. Community participation in the planning and management of the park can create a sense of belonging and shared responsibility, making Taman GOR not only a place for recreation but also a valuable social asset.

Overall, Taman GOR at Palu City is a reflection of the vital role of public space in urban life. With good management and sustainable development, this park can serve as a model for other public spaces in Indonesia, building a more inclusive, healthy and sustainable city.

### 3. Significance of Research Results

This research shows that Taman GOR at Palu City has an important role as a multifunctional public space that provides various benefits for the community. The results confirm the importance of sports facilities, green areas, and recreational spaces to support the physical, social, and cultural activities of the community. This finding is in line with the literature which states that public spaces can improve quality of life, strengthen social cohesion, and support environmental sustainability.

The diversity of visitor activities, ranging from sports to social interaction, reflects the inclusivity of Taman GOR as a shared space. The post-disaster transformation of the park is one of the main points that demonstrate the city's resilience in facing environmental and social challenges. However, the obstacles faced, such as damaged facilities, lack of seating, and suboptimal spatial layout, are evidence that the management of public spaces requires more attention to ensure that the benefits are maximized by all.

In the context of Palu City, Taman GOR not only functions as a recreational space but also as a symbol of post-disaster recovery. The damage suffered by the park due to the earthquake and tsunami shows how public spaces can be an indicator of the impact of disasters on urban communities. The revitalization of the park is evidence of the government and community's commitment to rebuilding facilities that are not only functional but also have social and ecological value.

The existence of communities that actively utilize Taman GOR, such as sports and art groups, shows the potential of public spaces as platforms for local cultural activities. However, the lack of promotion of certain facilities, such as the takraw court, suggests the need for a strategy to raise public awareness of the park's various potentials. This is relevant to the local challenges faced by Palu City, such as the need for inclusive spaces that are accessible to all levels of society.

### 4. Practical and Policy Implications

The results of this study provide several practical implications for the management and development of Taman GOR at Palu City:

- 1). Infrastructure Improvement:  
Revitalization of basic facilities such as toilets, seating, and night lighting is a priority to improve visitor comfort.
- 2). Facility Additions:  
The construction of jogging tracks, children's play areas, and community spaces can add to the attractiveness of the park as a multifunctional space.
- 3). Hygiene Management:  
Environmental awareness campaigns and improved waste management are needed to keep the park clean.
- 4). Community Participation:

Involving the community in park planning and management can create a sense of belonging and shared responsibility.

- 5). Use of Technology:  
Providing digital amenities such as free Wi-Fi or park apps can enhance the visitor experience.

From a policy perspective, these results suggest the need for integration of public spaces in city plans that focus on sustainability and inclusivity. The government can use Taman GOR as a model for the development of other public spaces in Palu City and surrounding areas.

## **5. Research Contribution to the Literature**

Findings on space use patterns, social interactions and management challenges provide new insights into the dynamics of public spaces in developing cities such as Palu. The results also enrich understanding of the relationship between green spaces, community activities and quality of life. By integrating local and global perspectives, this research offers a holistic approach to evaluate and develop public spaces in the future.

## **6. Research Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research**

This research has several limitations that need to be considered. First, the research focus was limited to one location so the results may not be fully generalizable to other public spaces in Palu City. Secondly, the method used focuses more on a qualitative approach so that quantitative measurements, such as the number of visitors or economic impact, have not been accommodated. In the interest of further research, the following are suggested:

- 1). Assess the economic and social impacts of Taman GOR more comprehensively.
- 2). Comparing the pattern of space use in Taman GOR with other public spaces in Palu City.
- 3). Integrate a quantitative approach to measure the effectiveness of park facilities.
- 4). Explore the role of technology in improving the function of public spaces.

Thus, this research can serve as a basis for further development, both in terms of theory and practice of public space management in Indonesia.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

Based on the results and discussion of this research, it can be concluded that the Taman GOR of Palu City has a significant function in supporting various aspects of people's lives. Visitors' motivations in utilizing Taman GOR are very diverse, including sports needs, recreation, social interaction, and seeking tranquility from the hustle and bustle of the city. Physical activities such as jogging, gymnastics, and community exercises are the main activities carried out in the morning to afternoon, while leisure activities and family recreation dominate the afternoon and evening. This motivation reflects the importance of public spaces that can accommodate the various needs of the community.

However, this study also revealed that the condition of the facilities at Taman GOR still requires a lot of improvement. Broken toilet facilities, lack of seating, the absence of a jogging track, and less than optimal hygiene management are the main obstacles faced by visitors. In addition, the less-than-optimal use of facilities such as the takraw court shows the need for better promotion and management to increase the benefits of this public space. These constraints show that while Taman GOR has provided many benefits, better management and maintenance are needed to ensure visitor comfort and safety.

Taman GOR also plays an important role in supporting the social and recreational life of the people of Palu City. As a public space, the park is a gathering place for various community groups, whether for sports, arts or family recreation activities. In addition, the park also serves as a symbol of post-disaster recovery, where people can once again feel safe and comfortable doing their activities. The existence of a soothing and inclusive green space makes Taman GOR a vital element in building the quality of life of urban communities. With better management and sustainable development strategies, Taman GOR can continue to evolve into a public space that not only meets the needs of the community, but also becomes a valuable social and environmental asset for Palu City.

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