

Interpersonal Communication on Social Stigma Towards Billiard Players Among Students in the Special Region of Yogyakarta

Erwin Yoga Pratama*, Muhammad Najih Farihanto

Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Indonesia

Email: erwin2100030033@webmail.uad.ac.id*

ABSTRACT

This study examines the forms of social stigma faced by pool players in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, as well as the interpersonal communication strategies they use to overcome it. Despite being recognized as an official sport, billiards is often viewed negatively by society and academics due to its association with nightlife and deviant behavior. As a result, pool players often face negative labels, stereotypes, and social and academic discrimination. This study uses a qualitative phenomenological approach with data collection techniques including in-depth interviews, participant observations, and documentation. The study participants were selected based on the criteria of active participation in the sport of billiards and experience in dealing with stigma. The results showed that pool students experienced psychological stress, such as shyness, low self-esteem, and social isolation. However, they are not passive; they use a variety of interpersonal communication strategies as a response to social rejection, including reinforcing self-concept, adjusting interpersonal perceptions, developing positive interpersonal attractions, and maintaining supportive interpersonal relationships. This research supports Goffman's theory of social stigma and Jalaluddin Rakhmat's concept of interpersonal communication. It makes a significant contribution to our understanding of how communication can be used to maintain personal identity and improve social acceptance in the context of cultural marginalization.

Keywords: Social Stigma, Interpersonal Communication, Students, Billiards, Social Marginalization

This article is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) 

INTRODUCTION

Billiards, also known as sign sports, is an entertainment sport with a long history and significant developments over time. According to The Billiard Congress of America (BCA), this game originated in the 15th century as an outdoor game played by European nobles, especially in France. The game was originally played outdoors, like croquettes, but was later adapted indoors and played on a special table covered with a green cloth that mimicked the grass in the field (Shamos 2001).

The transformation of billiards from a noble activity to a sport accessible to the public began in the 19th century. With the Industrial Revolution and advances in manufacturing technology, the production of pool tables and related equipment became easier and cheaper, which allowed the game to spread to all walks of life. In England, the rules of the game were codified and various variants emerged such as snooker, billiards, and carambol, each with different technical characteristics and rules of the game (Clive 1990).

In Indonesia, the game of billiards has been known since the Dutch colonial period. The game was initially introduced among the colonial and hospitality elite, before later expanding in several major cities as a recreational hobby. The Indonesian government officially recognized this sport with the establishment of the Indonesian Billiards Sports Association (POBSI) in 1950. POBSI then became an official organization tasked with fostering athletes, organizing competitions, and promoting national achievements in the sport of billiards. According to KONI data, billiards has been one of the sports that has been routinely competed in the National Sports Week (PON) since 1981 (KONI, 2021). Billiards is now positioned as an effective entertainment to overcome boredom. In addition, billiards was chosen because it is relatively affordable and comfortable to play, and it fits into various social contexts in society.

However, the image of billiards in Indonesian society is not completely free from negative stigma. Billiards is often associated with nightlife, gambling, and deviant behavior (Indrawan Lutfi et al. 2023). Distorted media portrayals and the management of billiards venues that are not in accordance with social values also exacerbate these stereotypes. As a result, students who play pool often face discrimination and marginalization in academic and social settings. They are often considered not serious in pursuing post-college education and are not in accordance with the ideal image of students upheld by educational institutions.

In the context of social communication, student identity emerges through a process of interaction and exchange of meaning that constantly occurs in an interpersonal context. Interpersonal communication, as explained by De Vito in (Suwatno. H 2023), not only as a means of conveying messages, but also plays an important role in the formation of self-image and social acceptance. In stigmatized situations, interpersonal communication becomes the most important tool for students to negotiate their identity, strengthen social acceptance, and maintain healthy relationships in the academic environment.

Goffman in (Trinugraha, Saputro, and Yuhastina 2023) defines social stigma as a negative label given to individuals who are perceived to deviate from the dominant social norms. Pool players who are exposed to this stigma face not only social barriers but also psychological pressure, such as low self-esteem, shyness, and social isolation (Leka and Muttaqin 2023). As a result, they struggle to establish open communication, build healthy social networks, and maintain a positive social standing on campus.

Several studies have highlighted the issue of stigma in sport and social life. (Yuliana, F., & Barlian 2023) noted that golf is considered an exclusive sport, which is only accessible to certain groups, while (Chairunnisa, Arum, and Salamah 2024) analyzes the relationship between interpersonal communication and students' psychological well-being. However, research that specifically examines the experiences of pool players about social stigma through interpersonal communication is still rare. Indeed, understanding students' first-hand experiences in this context is essential to developing a more inclusive and empathetic approach to higher education.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on billiards-playing students as a marginalized group in academic settings, analyzing how they manage stigma through specific interpersonal communication strategies. This perspective not only enriches the theoretical discussion on stigma and communication but also situates the research in the understudied context of non-mainstream sports in Indonesia's university environment.

Accordingly, the objectives of this study are: (1) to identify the types of social stigma faced by billiards students in university settings; and (2) to analyze the interpersonal communication strategies they use to overcome stigma and negotiate their student identity. The benefits of this research are twofold. Theoretically, it contributes to the study of interpersonal communication in marginalized contexts and expands the literature on stigma in non-mainstream sports. Practically, the findings are expected to inform universities and policymakers in fostering a more inclusive campus culture, while also empowering students to use communication as a tool for resilience and identity-building.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach to understand the personal experiences of students who played billiards and faced social stigma. It focused on how students interpreted their experiences and communicated in response to stigmatizing treatment (John W 2015).

The participants were students from the Special Region of Yogyakarta selected based on three criteria: (1) regular billiards players; (2) those who experienced social stigma related to billiards; and (3) willingness to participate in in-depth interviews. One key participant was Daffa Andhika Fa'ridhoo, a student and professional billiards athlete from the region.

The research took place in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, known as a student city and center of higher education, chosen for its unique social dynamics surrounding billiards. Data collection was conducted from June 2025 through all research phases.

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Interviews explored how students interpreted social stigma and responded through interpersonal communication. Daffa Andhika Fa'ridhoo provided valuable insights as both a student and professional billiards player. Participatory observation involved researchers directly engaging in billiards activities and observing student interactions and behaviors in pool halls and university settings, capturing verbal and nonverbal communication within stigmatized contexts (Bungin 2007). Documentation consisted of photos of billiards activities, social media posts by students, and official campus or community records, which strengthened data credibility and enriched contextual understanding (Sugiyono 2017).

Data analysis involved systematic processing of field records, interviews, and other sources to identify trends and patterns. The key stages were data reduction, filtering and synthesizing relevant data; data presentation, organizing data descriptively or visually to reveal patterns; and conclusion withdrawal and verification, interpreting data and validating findings through comparisons with informants or supplementary data (Huberman 1994).

To ensure validity, source triangulation was applied. This involved comparing data from different participants with varying social backgrounds and contexts to verify consistent patterns in experiences of social stigma. Cross-checking interview results, observations, and documentation ensured data reliability. Source triangulation enhanced the depth and validity of the findings by integrating diverse perspectives on the phenomena studied (Creswell 2018; Ravitch 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

Forms of Social Stigma Experienced by DIY Pool Players Students

Many students who like to play billiards are viewed negatively, both in the surrounding environment and on campus. They are often considered to be undisciplined, partying, and academically immoral. This is due to the strong belief that billiards is a deviant activity related to gambling and promiscuity. As a result, they often face discrimination, ranging from ridicule and ridicule to ostracism. Some of them often hide their hobbies from friends or teachers for fear of being judged negatively.



Figure 1. Weekly Fun Game Champion

Source: Instagram @jogabilliard

Daffa Andhika Fa'riddho as one of the main speakers conveyed his idea that "I often get a negative label by my friends and the surrounding environment that the game of billiards is denounced as a behavior that deviates from people's perception and is always associated with the world of gambling."

Psychological and Social Impact

College students who are interested in billiards often experience psychological distress, which is manifested by feelings of shyness, inferiority, and withdrawal from social interactions; Some even lose their enthusiasm for the academic field because they feel socially unacceptable. Some of the other primary data results that I got from billiards students in the Special Region of Yogyakarta psychologically and socially are, the decrease in confidence they feel in pursuing billiards sports, especially those who want to be competitive to become professional billiards athletes, unable to manage stress and emotions due to the negative stigma they get from certain social groups. Bia Ahmad Alfarisi is one of the informants directly involved in experiencing psychological and social impacts related to the stigma of billiards in this study.

Students' Strategies in Dealing with Stigma

Students who actively play billiards try to maintain a positive self-image and see themselves as athletes or sports activists, not deviant individuals. Thus, they also establish constructive interpersonal communication through their involvement in campus communities

and associations. Furthermore, they actively communicate to their peers that billiards is an official sport recognized by the state and is often played in national and international competitions. The communication strategies they usually use are persuasive and dialogical, avoiding direct confrontation to change the persistent negative perceptions in society. One of the billiards venues in the Special Region of Yogyakarta "Amora Billiard Community" is often used as a forum for professional billiards athletes in official tournament activities, I as the author of this study communicate in a direct way that is both persuasive and dialogical that effective communication can be used as a shield in facing stigma or negative stereotypes from certain people who consider that billiards sports are an activity that is diverge.

Discussion

Social Stigma as a Form of Symbolic Domination

According to Erving Goffman's stigma theory in (Trinugraha, Saputro, and Yuhastina 2023), social stigma arises when people are perceived to deviate from social norms and are labeled derogatively. The findings on the distorted labeling and stereotypes of student billiards players and have always been associated with the nightlife, gambling, are academically immoral showing how a misguided social construct can exclude people, even if the activities they engage in in this regard, billiards are recognized by the state as an official sport. Research (Indrawan Lutfi et al. 2023) corroborates these findings by showing that negative perceptions of billiards venues are still strong in society, especially because they are considered unsuitable places for the younger generation, especially in the campus environment. This creates an image of billiards players as deviant people from the average student.

The Psychological and Social Impact of DIY Billiards Players

According to (Leka and Muttaqin 2023), social stress caused by stigma can lead to psychological problems such as anxiety, shyness, and low self-esteem. In this study, students not only felt excluded but also experienced obstacles in developing their academic and social identities. Some even hide their activities to protect themselves, to the point of losing their enthusiasm for academics because they feel socially unacceptable. This shows that stigma not only affects people's perception of a person, but also their own perception.

Interpersonal Communication as an Adaptive Strategy

The findings that students use interpersonal communication to overcome stigma are in line with the theory (Jalaluddin 2021) of four important aspects of interpersonal communication:

Interpersonal perception

Interpersonal perception is the process by which a person tries to understand and interpret the behavior of others. This is achieved not only through what is seen or heard through the five senses, but also through life experiences, ways of thinking, personal attitudes, and the expectations of those around them.

This is important because it affects the way a person assesses the message they receive, whether it is perceived positively, neutrally, or even negatively. This perspective also plays a role in the quality of social relationships, both harmonious and misunderstood. Misperceptions, for example, due to prejudice or incomplete information, can easily lead to communication conflicts and disrupt human interactions.

Self-Concept

In interpersonal communication, self-esteem is an important message, because a person interacts, conveys the message, and responds immediately. A person's perception consists of three main components: self-image, physical, mental, and social evaluation; self-esteem, or the level of acceptance and self-esteem; and personal roles, or an understanding of their role in the social environment. These three aspects of interdependence, together, form internal perceptions that influence a person's daily communication style.

We believe that people with positive self-esteem tend to be happier, more confident, and able to build valuable relationships that focus on their own interests. Conversely, negative self-image can lead to feelings of inferiority, lack of social skills, and include difficulty communicating or building interpersonal relationships. Therefore, understanding self-esteem is essential for effective interpersonal communication, as the perceptual nature of a person also affects the way they interact with others.

Interpersonal Attractions

Interpersonal attraction is one of the most important aspects that distinguish interpersonal relationships. The interest that a person feels in others is the basis for the development of social closeness. This attitude can be triggered by a variety of factors, such as geographical distance (proximity), similarities, interests, or values, attractive appearance, and positive reactions from interested people (mutual respect). Attraction isn't just physical; Attraction also includes emotional, intellectual, and social compatibility, although these factors contribute to the relationship between the two and the world.

In the context of interpersonal communication, attitudes are the initial triggers that drive interaction. Generally, we communicate more openly and easily with someone we like or who we feel is a good fit. This level of influence affects the intelligence of the message: the stronger the interpersonal attitude, the smoother, more complete, and less incomprehensible the communication will be. Understanding the factors that influence the emergence of interpersonal attitudes is important for fostering social relationships, harmony, and mutual enrichment.

Interpersonal Relationships

A form of social connection that develops when two or more people communicate in an ongoing and meaningful manner. This relationship involves the exchange of messages, both verbal and physical, and is characterized by openness, empathy, trust, and mutual understanding. In practice, interpersonal relationships can be functional for example, task-related or individual or personal, based on emotional closeness and long-term commitment.

Interpersonal relationships develop gradually. It begins with initiation, the first contact between individuals; followed by exploration, as each begins to recognize the values and interests of others; increased, showing greater emotional commitment; and finally, entering the phase of integration, when identity and interests begin to converge. If not managed properly, relationships can enter a phase of decline or conflict.

These phases reflect that interpersonal relationships are not static, but are constantly evolving. In order for the relationship to remain healthy and high-quality, both parties must

commit to communicating openly, empathetically, and honestly to avoid misunderstandings or conflicts that can damage the bond that has been established.

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that pool players in the Special Region of Yogyakarta experience social stigma through negative labeling, stereotypes, and exclusion, which negatively affect their self-perception and lead to psychological and social challenges such as shyness, low self-esteem, and social avoidance. Despite these impacts, students actively use interpersonal communication strategies—such as managing self-concept, perceptions, attractions, and relationships—to cope with stigma. The findings support Goffman's theory of social stigma and Jalaluddin's interpersonal communication theory, highlighting communication's role in preserving identity and creating social meaning. Future research could explore intervention programs that strengthen these communication strategies to reduce stigma and improve social inclusion for stigmatized student groups in various cultural contexts.

REFERENCES

- Bungin, Burhan. 2007. *Penelitian Kualitatif: Komunikasi, Ekonomi, Kebijakan Publik, Dan Ilmu Sosial Lainnya*. Jakarta: Kencana.
- Chairunnisa, Adinda, Hadhana Syahda Arum, and Putri Ummi Salamah. 2024. "Pengaruh Hubungan Dan Komunikasi Interpersonal Terhadap Aspek Psikologis: Sebuah Systematic Review." *Jurnal Psikologi* 1(4): 14.
- Clive, Everton. 1990. *Snooker and Billiards: Techniques, Tactics, Training*. Ramsbury, Marlborough: Swindon, Wiltshire: Crowood Press. <https://archive.org/search.php?query=external-identifier%3A%22urn%3Alcp%3Asnookerbilliards0000ever%3Aepub%3A8cc6fe78-7c5c-411b-bffc-d1190c818f07%22>.
- Creswell, Poth. 2018. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches (4th Ed.)*. SAGE Publications.
- Huberman, Miles. 1994. *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*. Sage Publications).
- Indrawan Lutfi, Muhammad, Lisbet Situmorang, Abstrak Muhammad Indrawan Lutfi, and Stigma Masyarakat Tentang Permainan Billiard Di Kelurahan Timbau Kecamatan Tenggarong Kabupaten Kutai Kartanegara Dibawah Bimbingan. 2023. "Stigma Masyarakat Tentang Permainan Billiard Di Kelurahan Timbau Kecamatan Tenggarong Kabupaten Kutai Kartanegara." 2023(1): 60–75.
- Jalaluddin, Rakhmat. 2021. *Psikologi Komunikasi*. Cetakan Ke. ed. Surjaman Tjun & Soenandar Karyanti Rema. Jl. Ibu Inggit Ganarsih No. 31 Bandung 40252: PT Remaja Rosdakarya.
- John W, Creswell. 2015. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions*. ed. Diana E Axelsen. Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publications. <https://archive.org/search.php?query=external-identifier%3A%22urn%3Alcp%3Aqualitativeinqui0000cres%3Aepub%3Adacc18b0-3bbf-4eae-806a-3afa523b4a84%22>.
- Leka, Sheylia Ezarvin Theodora, and Darmawan Muttaqin. 2023. "Frustrasi Kebutuhan Dasar

- Psikologis Memediasi Hubungan Pengasuhan Kontrol Psikologis Dengan Agresi Relasional Remaja Di Kupang.” *Jurnal Psikologi Ulayat* 10: 210–31.
- Ravitch, Carl. 2021. *Qualitative Research: Bridging the Conceptual, Theoretical, and Methodological*. SAGE Publications.
- Shamos, Mike. 2001. *The New Illustrated Encyclopedia of Billiards*. New York: Guilford, Conn. : Lyons Press. <https://archive.org/search.php?query=external-identifier%3A%22urn%3Alcp%3Anewillustrateden0000sham%3Aepub%3A43af3550-72e8-4e2b-a76f-d115f38e3b6a%22>.
- Sugiyono. 2007. *Metodologi Penelitian Bisnis*. PT. Gramedia, Jakarta.
- . 2017. *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif, Kuantitatif, Dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- Suwatno. H, Arviana Nerissa. 2023. *Komunikasi Interpersonal: Panduan Membangun Keterampilan Relasional Kontemporer*. ed. Ulinuha Amirah Hidayat Rahmat Dadang. Jakarta Timur, Jl. Sawo Raya No. 18, Rawamangun, Indonesia: PT Bumi Aksara.
- Trinugraha, Yosafat Hermawan, Ruwanda Saputro, and Yuhastina Yuhastina. 2023. “Proses Stigmatisasi Pada Pengikut Penghayat Kepercayaan Pelajar Kawruh Jiwo Di Kota Surakarta: Kajian Teori Stigma Erving Goffmap.” *SOSIOHUMANIORA: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Sosial Dan Humaniora* 9(1): 93–111.
- Yuliana, F., & Barlian, E. 2023. “Perkembangan Stigma Olahraga Golf Sebagai Olahraga Kaum Elite Di Indonesia Dari Perspektif Pendidikan.” *Jurnal Lingkar Pendidikan (JLP)* 2(1): 14–23.