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THE RISE AND FALL OF PERSEGRES: THE FOOTPRINTS OF PT PETROKIMIA GRESIK IN THE DYNAMICS OF NATIONAL FOOTBALL COMPETITION (1978 – 1996)

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the role of PT Petrokimia Gresik in the development of football in Gresik from the 1980s to the early 1990s, focusing on social support and the company's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies, as well as how sports were utilized as a social and promotional tool. Utilizing historical research methods and Bowen's CSR framework retrospectively, this study analyzes the internal and external factors influencing the trajectory of the Persegres team. The results indicate that PT Petrokimia Gresik's substantial investment in infrastructure and athlete development through the application of CSR principles successfully established Persegres as a prominent football power while simultaneously building a positive corporate image. However, the team subsequently experienced a decline and relegation in 1995-1996 due to changes in the competition structure, reduced financial support, internal conflicts, incidents of supporter violence, and match-fixing practices. It is concluded that the success and sustainability of a football team are highly dependent on consistent corporate support, robust internal management, and adaptation to external dynamics. This study provides an academic contribution by highlighting the complexity of interactions between CSR principles, sports development, and social dynamics within the context of industrial and community development.

I. INTRODUCTION

During the decade of the 1970s to the 1990s, the legal landscape in Indonesia did not yet recognize an explicit obligation for companies to implement Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR); regulations mandating such actions only emerged in 2007 (*UU No. 40 Tahun 2007*, 2007). However, long before that, Government Regulation (PP) Number 3 of 1983 had been enacted, which clearly mandated State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN) to participate in broad

national development, transcending mere economic objectives (*PP No. 3 Tahun 1983*, 1983). This mandate created a unique space for BUMN to embrace a significant social role, even in the absence of specific CSR legislation. This distinct regulatory context serves as both a foundation and a crucial entry point for understanding how an economic entity (corporation) can move beyond its core business functions and embrace a profound social role, shaping a compelling narrative in the history of interaction between corporations and society, particularly within the field of sports relevant to the context of this research.

Within that enabling regulatory framework, PT Petrokimia Gresik, as a strategic State-Owned Enterprise (BUMN) during the New Order era, proactively implemented CSR principles through the development of football in Gresik Regency, specifically by supporting the Persegres team. The era of the 1980s to the early 1990s witnessed the company's dominance in advancing the sport, utilizing football as a primary platform to manage potential community resistance toward industrial impacts (Tempo, 1985). Under the leadership of President Director Ir. Sidharta, the company made substantial investments in the construction of sports infrastructure as well as intensive athlete development (Surabaya Post, 1982b, hlm. 10; Tempo, 1983). This profound attention was directly proportional to the achievements of Persegres, which successfully ascended from the Division I (Istanto, 2023) until reaching the highest caste of Indonesian amateur football in 1988 (Waspada, 1988d, p. xii). This involvement, in line with the dual mandate of BUMN (State-Owner Enterprises), simultaneously functioned as an instrument of social control, a balancer of community dynamics, and promotional tool to construct a positive corporate image.

Despite the prominence of this direct corporate involvement in the development of football, previous studies have not comprehensively examined the dynamic relationship between PT Petrokimia Gresik and Persegres, nor the complex factors influencing the fluctuations of that *perserikatan* (union) team. For example, a study by Nurul Maghfiroh (2018) titled "The Industrial Impact of PT Petrokimia Gresik on the Socio-Cultural Life of the Gresik Community," provides a general overview of the region's transformation, although it does not address football at all in its discussion (Maghfiroh, 2018). Meanwhile, Iksan Agung Nugroho (2016) in his work *Persatuan Sepak Bola Petrokimia Putra Gresik 1988-2005*, focuses more on the historical development of the Petrokimia Putra club, discussing Persegres only in a very limited capacity (Nugroho, 2016). Both studies, while relevant within the context of Gresik and Petrokimia, have not yet comprehensively scrutinized the dynamic relationship between PT Petrokimia Gresik and Persegres, nor the factors influencing the rise and fall of that *perserikatan* team.

Observing the limitations of previous studies, this research offers novelty by presenting a historical analysis regarding the fluctuations of Persegres, utilizing Howard R. Bowen's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) theoretical framework to examine the dynamics of corporate support and its impact on team's sustainability (Bowen, 2014). Bowen himself define CSR as 'the obligations of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to

follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society' (Bowen, 2014, p. 6). In Bowen's view, companies act as 'trustees' for various stakeholders (Bowen, 2014, p. 42), not merely shareholders, and generate 'social products' in addition to core commercial products (Bowen, 2014, p. 136). However, to provide a broader perspective, this study will integrate various factors, ranging from corporate support and internal team issues to the external dynamics of competition, within a single analytical framework. This approach provides a specific case study on the complexity of interactions between corporate social responsibility, football team management, and the external challenges that determined the trajectory of Persegres within Indonesian football competitions during that period.

II. METHODS

To reconstruct a historical event, the author of this article utilizes the historical research method. According to Gilbert J. Garraghan, the historical research method is a set of principles and systematic rules aimed at assisting historians in the collection of sources, which are then critically evaluated and presented as a synthesis, typically in written form (Kasdi, 2005, p. 10–11). Kuntowijoyo elaborates further, stating that historical research consists of five stages, each being topic selection, heuristics (source collection), verification (source criticism), interpretation (analysis-synthesis), and historiography (writing) (Kuntowijoyo, 2018, p. 69).

In the initial stage, the author collected various written sources, both primary and secondary, deemed relevant to this research. The author obtained these aforementioned sources from various locations, such as the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia (ANRI), the National Press Monument, as well as various journals accessible online. As for the primary sources, the author acquired several from ANRI, including reports from internal sources of PT Petrokimia Gresik. These sources were then enriched with interviews with several involved actors.

The primary sources mentioned were supplemented with secondary sources that the author traced from books, articles, newspapers, and other written materials. Both primary and secondary sources were then intensively reviewed for their veracity in terms of factual substance as well as their authenticity through various means. Information obtained through interviews, for example, still had to be compared with various written sources due to the risk of misinformation, particularly resulting from the declining memory of the informants. Conversely, information from the informants also frequently supplemented the deficiencies of information within the written sources.

After the criticism/verification stage was completed, an elaborative interpretation of the information from various sources was conducted. The referred elaborative work process involved the elimination, accumulation, and comparison of information obtained from those verified sources until it produced historical facts. These facts were then organized and narrated to produce

a work of historiography. At this stage, the selection of diction, the construction of sentences, and the building of the writing framework, including chapters and sub-chapters became crucial. All of this was conducted, as far as possible, while remaining oriented toward the primary problem that must be answered and presented optimally to the reader.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

PT Petrokimia Gresik: Strategic Foundations and Social Responsibility

Here is the translation into scientific English, maintaining the original sentence structure:

"As one of the pillars of the fertilizer industry in Indonesia, PT Petrokimia Gresik brought about significant transformation to the social and cultural order in Gresik Regency. This company not only triggered economic growth but also employed a highly strategic Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) approach beyond its core activities. Sports, specifically football, were consciously selected as a means to shape positive public perception while simultaneously strengthening relationships with the local community. This strategy aimed not only to fulfill the entertainment function for the surrounding society but was also utilized to manage social dynamics and mitigate potential tensions resulting from industrial impacts.

This approach is consistent with William J. Morgan's concept regarding the dualism of sports objectives. Morgan distinguishes between the intrinsic value of the game itself and its external function as a tool for achieving specific social goals (Morgan, 2021, hlm. 41–46). PT Petrokimia Gresik astutely integrated these two aspects, expanding the scope of sports activities from mere internal corporate functions into drivers of broader social impact beyond the factory gates. Through sports, the State-Owned Enterprise (BUMN) successfully conveyed the company's core values and fostered a sense of collective ownership among a society thirsty for achievement, and the name of Ir. Sidharta must be cited as the figure most responsible during this initial stage.

He, who served as President Director from 1977 to 1983 (Tim Penulis Petrokimia Gresik, 1992, p. 43) implemented various fundamental policies in this sector through substantial investments encompassing infrastructure construction and athlete development programs. At the very least, the company allocated funds amounting to IDR 1 billion to construct various representative sports facilities, supplemented by IDR 30 million per year for structured athlete development programs (Surabaya Post, 1982b, p. 10; Tempo, 1983). Consequently, the achievements of athletes nurtured by PT Petrokimia Gresik increased drastically, even reaching the level of the National Sports Week (PON), and led Sidharta to receive a prestigious award as the best sports patron from SIWO-PWI East Java (Surabaya Post, 1982b, p. 10).

The dedication of PT Petrokimia Gresik extended beyond internal development for its staff and athletes. Carrying the spirit of the Panji Olahraga (Sports Banner) echoed by the government (*Speech Manuscript at the Opening of the 4th National Sports Deliberation, at the State Palace, 1981*), the company participated in developing sports among the Gresik community, particularly

football. This was manifested through various tangible programs that provided a direct impact on the local community. For instance, the company established the Sunan Giri football field in Manyarejo in 1981 (Surabaya Post, 1981, p. 10) and a field within the employee housing complex in Pongangan, both which were open to the public (T. Siswanto, komunikasi pribadi, 23 November 2024). These measures guaranteed the accessibility of sports facilities for the wider community, while simultaneously strengthening the bond between the company and the local residents (The PT Petrokimia Gresik Writing Team, 1988, p. 128).

From a socio-political perspective, the involvement of PT Petrokimia Gresik in football is rooted in the philosophy of *'di mana dipijak, di situ langit dijunjung'* (wherever one stands on earth, there the sky is held high). This principle explicitly demonstrates the company's social commitment to the residents of Gresik, who at that time still lacked adequate sports facilities and development platforms (S. Suparlan, personal communication, August 14 2025). Furthermore, the presence of a large industrial complex often triggers negative consequences, such as environmental issues that possess the potential for social unrest. Therefore, the presence of an achieving football team and entertaining matches were expected to serve as a means of recreation and a form of diversion. In other words, football functioned as a strategic balancer of social dynamics (F. R. Hattu, personal communication, December 10 2024).

This concept aligns with the notion that sports play a crucial role as an instrument of social control, as well as a shaper of individual and collective behavior (Bale, 1989, p. 53). During that period, PT Petrokimia Gresik was the only entity most likely to use sports for such purposes, given the budgetary constraints of the local government (Fajar, 1986, p. ii). The company's proactive initiative in providing sports facilities since the late 1970s proved quite effective in dampening criticism regarding their production activities in the early 1980s. With the existence of sports facilities accessible to and enjoyed by the public, environmental issues that had resurfaced in the early 1990s quickly and gradually receded (Harian Ekonomi Neraca, 1993a, p. 4).

Consciously, PT Petrokimia Gresik incorporated sports into its primary promotion and media strategy to cultivate a positive image as a responsive State-Owned Enterprise (BUMN), rather than being strictly confined to its core business. The Petrogres core team frequently conducted 'tours' to various regions; beyond merely competing, they utilized these opportunities to introduce their products and identity (Nugroho, 2016, p. 15). Through the distribution of promotional materials, this method proved to be an efficient non-conventional approach to reaching a wide audience while simultaneously building a reputation as a company that provides tangible contributions.

PT Petrokimia Gresik and the Early Rise of Persegres

Before PT Petrokimia Gresik became directly involved in the development of Persegres, the team could be described as being far from achieving any commendable accomplishments. In fact, the team was established on November 2, 1962, according to the data listed in the PSSI *Sidang Paripurna Pengurus* (Board Plenary Session) in Semarang, December 1963 (Jawa Pos, 1993, p. 14; Nugroho, 2016, p. 18). However, this association frequently exhibited inconsistency in organizing internal competition due to constraints in facilities, finance, and human resources (Nugroho, 2016, p. 18). These conditions made it difficult for Persegres to make a significant impact in national-level competitions, leaving them struggling within Division III and Division II (Herfiyana & Istanto, 2023). These difficulties were clearly evident in 1978, when Persegres, through various elements of the Gresik local government, even had to organize a special event to raise funds for the continued survival of the association (Jawa Pos, 1978, p. 6).

In 1978, PT Petrokimia Gresik officially joined as a member of Persegres through its fostered club named PS Petrogres. The company demonstrated its seriousness in this internal competition by recruiting several PS Kertas Gowa players, such as Abdul Muis, Abdul Hamid, and Hasanudin Baso (T. Siswanto, personal communication, November 23 2024; S. Suparlan, personal communication, August 14 2025). They were all players who had previously been under the tutelage of Ir. Sidharta during his tenure as the President Director of Perum Kertas Gowa (Surabaya Post, 1982b, p. 10). From that point, Persegres' internal competition found its momentum as an association, although it ultimately revealed an imbalance between Petrogres and the other clubs, the majority of which were village football associations (Khusairi, personal communication, July 26 2025). The dominance of the company's role in Persegres became increasingly undeniable when the Head of the Human Resources (HR) Bureau of PT Petrokimia Gresik, J. Tehupeiori, was elected as the General Chairperson of the association in 1979 (Nugroho, 2016, p. 16).

Beyond the 'contribution' of the stadium and the active participation of its fostered club, PT Petrokimia Gresik also directly intervened in football development through its involvement in the management of Persegres. A 1981 *Surabaya Post* report aptly illustrates that the company's role was far greater than that of a mere participating contestant. In a Persegres board meeting regarding the Soeratin Cup, 52 players were selected to attend a training camp in preparation for the competition. The forum elected Ir. Soerahmat from the Petrogres club as the Executive Chairperson of the training camp (Surabaya Post, 1982a, p. 10).

This meeting itself was presided over directly by the General Chairperson of Persegres and a senior executive of PT Petrokimia Gresik, J. Tehupeiori, and was held at the company's sports hall (Surabaya Post, 1982a, p. 10). This proves that an early corporate initiative had emerged to actively engage in the improvement of Gresik's football achievements through player development, human resources in management, and facilities. This vital role would continue to

be played by PT Petrokimia Gresik in overseeing Persegres' journey until 1994. Funding, player supply, management, and facilities, almost all were sourced from the company. To prove this, the team's journey until its degradation in 1996 needs to be detailed comprehensively.

The Rise of Persegres: From Division I to the Premier Division (1985-1988)

From the solid foundation established by PT Petrokimia Gresik, particularly under the visionary leadership of Ir. Sidharta, who was often nicknamed '*Gila Bola*' (Crazy for Football), a new chapter opened for the world of Gresik football. The company's support was not merely general in nature. Rather, it manifested tangibly in the development of the Petrogres club, which subsequently became the primary face of Persegres. This strategic initiative rapidly elevated Persegres into a force to be reckoned with in the local competition arena, thanks to the company's full support in both developmental aspects and supporting infrastructure.

After being mere spectators during the two rounds of the PSSI national competition held in Gresik in 1983 (Berita Yudha, 1983a, p. xi, 1983b, p. xi), Persegres began to demonstrate its ambition in the 1985 competition season in Division I, the second tier of the national football hierarchy at the time. Bolstered by players who had matured through a series of intensive trials and PT Petrokimia Gresik's tiered development programs, the team showed great promise. They successfully advanced to the Round of 8 after emerging as group winners in the preliminary round, securing a perfect six points without suffering a single defeat (Istanto, 2023). Although their progress was halted by Persiba Balikpapan before reaching the final, this impressive performance succeeded in awakening the enthusiasm and optimism of the Gresik people toward their beloved team (Waspada, 1985, p. xii).

In the 1986-1987 season, Persegres proved that the previous season's achievement was not a mere coincidence. They successfully reached the final stage of the Perserikatan Division I, namely the 'Big 4' (Round of 4) held in Solo, competing closely against formidable teams such as Persitara North Jakarta and PSDS Deli Serdang. Although the mission to secure promotion to the Premier Division (Divisi Utama) once again failed to materialize, Persegres continued to demonstrate an excellent and stable quality of play (Istanto, 2021). Furthermore, due to his promising quality, one of their main pillars, Ferril R. Hattu, was honored to represent the National Team in the Independence Cup, a recognition of the individual talent quality possessed and produced by Persegres as well as PT Petrokimia Gresik (Bisnis Indonesia, 1987, p. 11).

Reflecting on the impressive achievements of the past two editions, Persegres' target to penetrate the Premier Division felt increasingly realistic and well-founded. That prediction proved accurate during the 1988 season when they successfully advanced to the final stage, the 'Big 4' round held at the Senayan Main Stadium, Jakarta (Waspada, 1988a, p. xii). Playing in this 'hallowed' stadium was not only an opportunity but also a source of distinct pride, driving the people of Gresik to provide direct support, even though they had to travel a long distance to the

capital. The spirit of the Persegres supporters was palpable in every match, serving as a valuable injection of motivation for the team's struggle (Waspada, 1988b, p. xii).

In that decisive round, Persegres successfully defeated PSA Ambon with a score of 2-1, through goals from Yance E. Matmey and Hasan Maghrobi in the opening match. The performance of the Gresik-based team was deemed superior by several observers, in terms of both individual quality and player cooperation (Waspada, 1988b, p. xii). His reflected quality, maturity, and experience, demonstrating the results of PT Petrokimia Gresik's development programs over the years. Although they performed below their peak at the beginning of the second match, Persegres successfully displayed mental maturity by rallying back to force a 2-2 draw against Persita Tangerang (Waspada, 1988c, p. xii). This result placed them at the top of the temporary standings, wide opening the chance for promotion.

That historic moment finally arrived on Friday, February 26, 1988, when Persegres successfully secured a draw against Persiraja Banda Aceh. The final score of 1-1 guaranteed an automatic spot for Persegres to promote to the Perserikatan Premier Division, accompanied by Persita as the runner-up (Waspada, 1988d, p. xii). This achievement simultaneously placed Persegres at the same level as the major teams in Indonesia. Consequently, it is unsurprising that this qualification was met with an extraordinary outpouring of joy by the people of Gresik. The players and officials were welcomed by thousands of residents with great enthusiasm, before being paraded around the city upon their arrival from Jakarta (Jawa Pos, 1988, p. x; Nugroho, 2016, p. 23).

This historic achievement was the result of the consistency and long-term commitment of PT Petrokimia Gresik for approximately one decade, dating back to when the company first became active in Persegres in 1978 (Nugroho, 2016, hlm. 18). To that end, as a form of appreciation, PT Petrokimia Gresik immortalized the names of the players and officials on a plaque engraved in the entrance corridor of the Tri Dharma Stadium. This success not only fostered a collective pride for the entire community of Gresik but was also inherently attached to the identity of PT Petrokimia Gresik, strengthening the company's image as an entity that cares and provides significant contributions to the local community (Neraca, 1988, hlm. xii).

Challenges in the Premier Division and Team Dynamics (1989-1992)

After successfully stepping into the highest caste, Persegres was immediately confronted with the reality of much tougher competition in the Premier Division. In the same year, PT Petrokimia Gresik made a strategic decision to establish a new club named Petrokimia Putra, which was projected to compete in the Galatama semi-professional competition. This policy was followed by the migration of Persegres' pillar players and coaches to the new club, which utilized the corporate identity directly, forcing Persegres to overhaul its squad within a relatively short period.

Responding to this situation, the Persegres management promptly appointed the coaching duo of Nino Sutrisno and Marek Janota to lead the team through the transition period. Both immediately commenced the recruitment process for new players, including several potential talents from Bandung, to rebuild a solid and competitive team strength (F. R. Hattu, personal communication, December 10 2024; S. Suparlan, personal communication, August 14 2025). A series of exhibition matches, including a tour to Bali, became a crucial part of maturing the composition of this newly formed squad. Although they suffered a narrow defeat at one point (Bali Post, 1989a, p. xii), Persegres showed promising progress with several landslide victories during the Bali tour (Bali Post, 1989b, p. xii), providing a glimmer of hope amidst serious challenges regarding the overall quality of the team.

Upon their return to Gresik, Persegres was confirmed to participate in the Petrokimia Cup, a prestigious tournament organized by their parent company (Bali Post, 1989c, p. xii). Although their 'sibling' club, Petrokimia Putra, as a semi-professional entity, was more highly favored, Persegres delivered an impressive performance by reaching the semifinals and successfully clinching third place (Bali Post, 1989d, p. xii). However, the team's internal dynamics remained volatile; coach Marek Janota was dismissed, and Nino Sutrisno chose to depart (Bali Post, 1990e, p. xii). Ultimately, Sutan Harhara, a former National Team coach, was entrusted to helm the team during its debut in the Premier Division (Neraca, 1989a, p. xi).

Persegres' debut in the 1989-1990 Premier Division season began with a rigorous test, immediately facing the defending champions, Persebaya (Neraca, 1989b, p. xi). In that match, Persegres had to concede to their opponent's superiority with a narrow 0-1 home defeat, a less-than-ideal start that underscored the intensity of the competition (Neraca, 1989c, p. xi). By the end of the first round, Persegres was stranded at the bottom of the East Region standings, only managing to collect four points from draws without securing a single victory (Bali Post, 1989e, p. xii). Responding to these minor results, coach Sutan Harhara and his assistant, Slamet Haryono, argued that the team still lacked experience and that the players had yet to demonstrate the expected consistency in performance (Bali Post, 1990a, p. xi).

A more realistic target was then established: avoiding relegation. To this end, the team manager, Supardi, attempted to boost motivation by promising bonuses for every positive result achieved by the team (Bali Post, 1990a, p. xi). However, the second round ironically yielded even worse results, adding only three points without securing a single victory, which left their position increasingly precarious at the bottom of the standings (Bali Post, 1990b, p. xii). As a consequence of this poor performance, Persegres was forced to undergo the 'Bottom 4' play-off round to maintain its place in the Premier Division, a high-pressure, 'life-or-death' struggle (Berita Yudha, 1990a, p. xii). Fortunately, in the decisive match against PS Bengkulu, Persegres delivered an excellent performance and secured a convincing 3-0 victory (Berita Yudha, 1990b, p. i and x; Neraca, 1990, p. xi).

This crucial victory ensured that Persegres remained in the highest tier of Indonesian amateur football, an achievement of great significance for the team and all its supporting elements. This success deserves high appreciation, particularly given their status as a promoted team with a relatively young squad that lacked experience at such a level. Since the majority of their best players had been transferred to Petrokimia Putra, Persegres' success in avoiding relegation also demonstrated the effectiveness of the development system established by PT Petrokimia Gresik. As a form of recognition for the team's dedication, the management of the state-owned enterprise once again immortalized the names of the players and officials on a similar plaque, carving the history of their struggle to remain at the top level.

Approaching the 1991-1992 season, Persegres was once again confronted with the same challenge: the loss of its players, as key pillars such as Encang Ibrahim and Ning Syaifullah were recalled to strengthen Petrokimia Putra. This underscored that the company's primary focus at that time was Petrokimia Putra in the semi-professional competition. This condition constantly tested Persegres' squad depth and adaptability. Nevertheless, Persegres continued to demonstrate serious preparation by once again undergoing a pre-season tour to Bali, although the results were not particularly satisfactory (Bali Post, 1990c, p. xii, 1990d, p. xii).

Despite being left by its key pillars, Persegres managed to deliver another surprising performance in the Petrokimia Cup II, demonstrating team resilience and high-intensity spirit in front of their home public. They successfully eliminated formidable teams such as Persebaya and Persib in the group stage, an unexpected achievement that sparked euphoria among supporters (Media Indonesia, 1991a, p. 9). Furthermore, Persegres succeeded in defeating the tournament's defending champions, PKT, in the semifinal round (Media Indonesia, 1991b, p. 9). Unfortunately, they had to settle for the runner-up position after succumbing in a penalty shootout drama against their 'sibling' club, Petrokimia Putra, in the final, a result that remained a source of pride and demonstrated their significant potential ahead of the new season (Media Indonesia, 1991c, p. 9).

Persegres' impressive performance continued into the 1991-1992 Premier Division East Region season, this time under the guidance of coach Risdianto. They were able to exhibit an engaging style of play and secured their ticket to the 'Big 6' (Round of 6) as early as the seventh match, defeating PSIS 2-0 in front of 10,000 supporters who packed the Tri Dharma Stadium (Bernas, 1992a, p. 1 and 11). Persegres concluded the preliminary round in second place with 13 points, with striker Kalbaryanto emerging as one of the top scorers, complementing their brilliant performance that season (Bernas, 1992b, p. 10). This success certainly surprised many parties, as the team remained capable of competing at the top of the standings despite having been deserted by its main pillars.

Ahead of the 'Big 6' round, the Persegres manager and physician at the Petrokimia Gresik Hospital, Sugeng Suparlan, expressed concern regarding the atmosphere of Senayan, which he believed could adversely affect the players' psychological state. Consequently, Sugeng requested that the players perform without burden and uphold the good reputation of the city of Gresik (Bali Post, 1992a, p. 16). In that round, Persegres delivered a relatively resilient performance, despite having to face formidable teams. After suffering a narrow defeat against PSMS Medan in the opening match (Bernas, 1992c, p. 10), They successfully held PSM Ujung Pandang to a 0-0 draw in the second match (Bernas, 1992d, p. 10). This result ensured that Persegres still maintained a chance to qualify for the semifinal round; however, their fate depended entirely on the outcome of other matches, specifically the fixture between PSMS Medan and PSM Ujung Pandang.

The match between PSMS and PSM became the primary focus of attention, as a draw would automatically eliminate Persegres from the competition. The public expectation was to witness a competitive and spirited fixture, given the long-standing reputations of both teams as national football powerhouses. Regrettably, the events on the pitch fell far short of expectations; the match proceeded monotonically with minimal attacking play, and both teams appeared to lack a strong desire to secure a victory (Bernas, 1992e, p. 10).

This draw scenario, which directly eliminated Persegres, triggered a severe reaction from the spectators in attendance. They vented their disappointment by chanting the phrase, 'Main sabun, ayam main sabunan' accusation implying match-fixing (Bernas, 1992e, p. 10). This unsportsmanlike conduct significantly tarnished the values of fair play and the integrity of the competition, although it had actually been predicted following Persegres' second match. At that time, the PSM coach, Syamsudin Umar, had stated, 'the important thing is to be safe first,' indicating that two draws were sufficient for his team to qualify (Bali Post, 1992b, p. 12).

The Persegres manager, Sugeng Suparlan, could not conceal his disappointment over the results of the match between the two teams. He explicitly accused both parties of orchestrating the PSMS versus PSM fixture. Sugeng highlighted the character of both teams, historically known for being tenacious and fanatic, yet they suddenly exhibited a monotonous, even tedious playstyle, as if there were a clandestine agreement behind the scenes. For him, this incident was a devastating blow that buried Persegres' hopes of progressing further. Although his team had fought strenuously, it was insufficient because their fate was ultimately determined by the actions of other teams (Bali Post, 1992c, hlm. 12).

This controversy serves as an illustration of the challenges faced by Perserikatan teams at that time, where they had to compete not only against the strength of opponents on the field but also against technical factors off the field that could influence match results. Although, Persegres had demonstrated significant improvement and great potential, incidents such as this effectively hindered their ambitions of achieving higher success and left a sense of grievance for both the

players and their loyal supporters. This situation became a point of evaluation for the players and management as they prepared to navigate the following season.

The 1993-1994 Season: The Final Premier Division and the ‘Football Protest’ Controversy

Following the conclusion of the 1991-1992 season, Persegres entered relatively long hiatus prior to the commencement of the 1993-1994 Premier Division, a phase that would later become one of the most memorable in their history. To refine their readiness, the team engaged in several friendly matches, and Bali was once again selected as the primary location to solidify both tactics and player synergy (Bali Post, 1993a, p. 12, 1993b, p. 16). During this preparatory period, a crucial change occurred in the coaching position. Risdianto, who had previously succeeded in refining Persegres into a formidable squad, was replaced by his assistant, Slamet Haryono (Bali Post, 1992d, p. 12). This transition emerged after Risdianto's name entered the candidate pool for the National Team coaching position for the Independence Cup (*Piala Kemerdekaan*), signifying his rising reputation due to his brilliant performance with the Gresik-based team (Bernas, 1992g, p. 10).

When the competition commenced, Persegres was under the control of a coaching trio consisting of Sanusi Rahman, Waskito, and Slamet Haryono, who were tasked with formulating the team amidst significant challenges (Bali Post, 1993c, p. 12). The Persegres squad experienced yet another exodus of key players; Sasono Handito, Encang Ibrahim, and Neng Syaifullah were recalled to Petrokimia Putra (Bali Post, 1992e, p. 12), while Kekey Zakaria opted to return to Persib (Bali Post, 1993a, p. 16). With the remaining player composition, Persegres inaugurated the 1993-1994 Premier Division by hosting Persiba at the Tri Dharma Stadium in Gresik on November 13, 1993. Unfortunately, the hosts suffered a 0-2 defeat due to the stunning performance of the opposing goalkeeper, Agus Waluyo, who successfully thwarted Persegres' golden opportunities (Bali Post, 1993b, p. 12).

This home defeat triggered an extraordinary emotional reaction from the supporters. They vented their anger by damaging stadium facilities, burning banners bearing the name Persegres, and even altering the figures on the scoreboard to 35-0 as a form of severe protest. Tensions reached a climax when spectators hurled hard objects toward the players and officials, injuring a linesman and forcing the referee to abandon the match in the 87th minute (Bali Post, 1993b, p. 12). The Chairman of the Amateur League, Agum Gumelar, lamented the incident, emphasizing the necessity of adequate security measures and appealing to supporters to uphold the reputation of their region (Harian Ekonomi Neraca, 1993b, p. 11). As a consequence of these events, the PSSI Disciplinary Committee issued a stern warning to the Persegres team (Bali Post, 1993d, p. 12).

Despite encountering a difficult start, Persegres demonstrated an improvement in performance during the first half of the East Region preliminary round, successfully accumulating 6 points after defeating Persema 2-0 in the final match (Bali Post, 1993e, p. 16).

Uniquely, Persegres recorded a higher number of yellow cards than the total points they earned, illustrating the intensity and aggressiveness of their playstyle, which was indeed comprised of a majority of young players (Harian Ekonomi Neraca, 1993c, p. 12). In the second half of the competition, Persegres' performance continued to ascend; they successfully avenged their previous defeat against Persiba with a convincing 3-0 victory in Balikpapan, propelling them to fourth position with a total of 8 points (Waspada, 1994a, hlm. 12).

However, for Persegres, that season was more synonymous with off-field incidents. The supporter riots during the first match were merely a prelude to a more significant incident mid-season. In the eleventh week, a historic match took place between Persegres and Persebaya at the Tri Dharma Stadium in Gresik, witnessed by approximately 16,000 spectators, the majority of whom were fanatic supporters of Persebaya. This fixture devolved into a riot after a Persebaya player, Nurul Huda, sustained an injury from a thrown stone, triggering an outburst of anger from supporters who proceeded to vandalize the stadium and assault officials (Berita Yudha, 1994a, p. x).

Supporter dissatisfaction was also precipitated by Persebaya's decision to field their reserve players. The Persebaya management justified this action by citing concerns over potential injuries, a technical decision that was, in fact, quite reasonable (Berita Yudha, 1994a, p. x). Nevertheless, the events of that afternoon ultimately tarnished the image of national football. This was particularly significant as officials from FIFA and the AFC, including the former Dutch national team coach Rinus Michels, were in attendance to personally assess the development of Indonesian football and conduct a coaching clinic (Waspada, 1994b, p. 12).

Following a series of initial matches marred by incidents of supporter violence, public attention subsequently shifted toward a more systemic and unsettling phenomenon. This phenomenon was known as 'Protest Football' (*Sepakbola Unjuk Rasa*), a term referring to the practice of coordinated match-fixing conducted not merely as individual fraud, but as a form of collective protest. The roots of this practice were firmly embedded in deep regionalist sentiments. This controversy cannot be decoupled from the strong ties of primordialism that were deeply rooted in the structure of Indonesian football during that era, particularly within the *Perserikatan* competition (Bernas, 1992f, p. 10).

Primordialism, in this context, describes the profound loyalty and identification toward a group based on ethnic origin, region, or community. In East Java, for instance, an unwritten alliance was formed among three primary football powers: Surabaya (Persebaya), Gresik (Persegres), and Malang (Persema), frequently referred to as 'SGM.' This regional solidarity served as the primary driver behind the practice of 'Protest Football.' These teams sought to mutually protect one another and manipulate match outcomes for their collective interest, primarily aimed at ensuring their survival in the top tier or eliminating competitors from outside the alliance.

The initial initiative to launch this 'Protest Football' specifically originated from the dissatisfaction of the Persebaya Surabaya manager, Agil Haji Ali. He felt significantly disadvantaged by the referee's decisions in a crucial match against PSIS Semarang on January 26, 1994. Agil Haji Ali accused referee Helmi Piliang of acting unfairly by awarding two penalties that he deemed illegitimate. His reasoning was that the ball had struck the Persebaya player's chest rather than the hand; consequently, the decision was considered erroneous (Berita Yudha, 1994b, p. x).

The indignation over the incident, which was perceived as detrimental to his team, subsequently prompted Agil Haji Ali to mobilize the 'protest' action. He implicitly threatened to orchestrate a scenario in which PSIS would fail to qualify for the subsequent round, or even face relegation if possible (Bali Post, 1994a, p. 12; Berita Yudha, 1994b, p. x). This measure was then followed by other teams within the alliance, creating a complex scenario. The climax of 'Protest Football' occurred in late January and early February 1994, during the final phases of the group stage, which determined the respective fates of each team.

On January 30, Persebaya effectively 'conceded' to Persema with a score of 3-1. A day later, on January 31, PSIM, which was technically superior, instead surrendered a 2-1 victory to Persegres (Berita Yudha, 1994c, p. x). This scenario was designed to relegate PSIS and, conversely, salvage Persema, while simultaneously ensuring that Persebaya and Persegres qualified for the subsequent round. However, these match-fixing practices were eventually detected by the PSSI, which subsequently summoned all related parties on February 2. The perpetrators admitted that their actions had deviated from sporting values and pledged not to repeat them in the remaining fixtures (Berita Yudha, 1994d, p. x).

Despite having stated their commitment, the final match results indicated that the scenario persisted; Persebaya once again triumphed over PSIM with a 3-2 score, and Persegres suffered a defeat against Persema, whereas the primary target, PSIS, succeeded in defeating Persiba. Consequently, Persiba Balikpapan, who was not involved in the 'protest', was the party that suffered relegation, while PSIS secured their safety (Bali Post, 1994b, p. 12). This case demonstrates how regional elements and group solidarity can trigger systematic coordination to maintain the position and honor of a collective. Although it drew widespread condemnation, 'Protest Football' paradoxically contributed to the enduring existence of East Java as the mecca of national football at that time, with Gresik successfully establishing its reputation through the achievements of Persegres.

Persegres subsequently advanced to the 'Round of 8' (*8 Besar*), which commenced on April 8, 1994, joined in Group L alongside Persebaya, PSMS, and Persija (Berita Yudha, 1994e, p. x). The Chairman of Persegres, Djuhansah, who also served as the Regent of Gresik, announced that the supporting funds had been prepared. He stated that 40 million Rupiah had been secured from the proceeds of a milkfish auction, while the remaining 150 million Rupiah would be raised

through public contributions, local entrepreneurs, and the Regional Government Budget (APBD). Djuhansah targeted the team to qualify for the 'Final Four,' with the possibility of reaching the final and winning the championship, by promising bonuses to motivate the players. He believed that the team's status as relatively young and lacking experience served as an advantage, as it allowed the players to perform more freely without undue pressure (Berita Yudha, 1994f, p. x).

However, moral and financial support did not guarantee that everything would proceed according to plan. After suffering defeats against Persebaya and PSMS, Persegres concluded this round earning only a single point from a draw against Persija (Bali Post, 1994d, p. 12). In that final fixture, the Persegres management felt disadvantaged by referee Widiyanto's decision to award a controversial penalty to Persija, and they officially submitted a letter of protest to the PSSI (Bali Post, 1994c, p. 12). Responding to the protest, the Chairman of the Referee Committee, Djaffar Umar, asserted that the referee's decision was correct and that Persegres must remain content with their position as the 'cellar dwellers' (bottom-placed team) of Group L, thus ending their journey in the 1993-1994 Premier Division (Bali Post, 1994e, p. 12).

Shifted Priorities and the Decline of Persegres (Post 1994-1995)

After the turbulent 1993-1994 competition season subsided, a new chapter in the history of Indonesian football opened wide. This era was marked by the unification of Galatama and *Perserikatan* into the Indonesian League (*Liga Indonesia* or *Ligina*), a fundamental change that took place during the 1994-1995 season (Berita Yudha, 1994g, p. x). While this transformation brought promising new opportunities, it simultaneously presented formidable challenges for Persegres. Unfortunately for the pride of Gresik, the Ligina era served as a silent witness to a difficult journey toward relegation from the nation's top flight, a significant setback when considering their relatively stable achievements over the preceding seasons.

Entering the 1994-1995 season, the inaugural edition of Ligina, Persegres was confronted with their perennial classic problem. Petrokimia Putra, which had now become the primary focus of the parent company, freely recruited their finest players. Key stars such as Eri Irianto, Suwandi HS, Rendiana Putra, and Zainul Arifin, who had previously served as the backbone of Persegres, now reinforced their 'sibling' club, leaving a substantial void in the squad. Consequently, the strength of the team coached by Waskito was significantly reduced, forcing Persegres to rely on local East Javanese players and several veterans, including Hanafing and Abdul Hamid (Berita Yudha, 1994i, p. x). They could only hope to garner the sympathy of the Gresik public to motivate a team that was now far from ideal (Berita Yudha, 1994h, p. x).

The shift in PT Petrokimia Gresik's priorities became conspicuously evident during the Ligina era, as the corporation could no longer bifurcate its concentration and resources between two teams simultaneously. Consequently, Liga Indonesia I can be characterized as the beginning of the company's decoupling from Persegres, which from that point forward began to be managed by the local government. This marked the conclusion of an era of corporate support that had

previously dominated for more than a decade. Amidst these circumstances, Persegres demonstrably struggled to contend with their opponents, particularly the Galatama clubs that were now bolstered by foreign players, a new standard in the professional competition initiated by the PSSI (Bali Post, 1993f, p. 1 and 11).

Beyond the challenges on the pitch, a negative image also overshadowed Persegres due to the reprehensible conduct of its supporters (Berita Yudha, 1994j, p. x, 1994k, p. x). This poor reputation was further compounded by a conflict between the team and journalists resulting from the arrogant actions of its manager, Yahdi. His refusal to grant interviews was perceived as a form of harassment and professional misconduct. Consequently, journalists retaliated with a media boycott that adversely affected the team, adding to the burdens placed upon Persegres. This conflict only subsided after the Chairman of Persegres, who was also the Regent of Gresik, Soewarso, intervened directly to de-escalate the tensions (Berita Yudha, 1995a, p. x). These issues presented unique challenges for Persegres after they were no longer managed by PT Petrokimia Gresik, underscoring the necessity of experienced management in navigating professional competitions.

Given the myriad constraints both on and off the pitch, coach Waskito realistically stated that Persegres did not dare to target high achievements during that season. Their primary focus was merely to exert every possible effort to recruit players willing to reinforce a currently crippled squad (Berita Yudha, 1995b, p. x and xi). Nevertheless, the team was still bolstered by several experienced players across the defensive, midfield, and forward lines, such as Abdul Khamid, Masrukan, or Rodek, who were combined with young players possessing minimal competitive experience (Berita Yudha, 1995c, p. x). Ultimately, Persegres managed to conclude the competition in 14th place with 32 points; a result which, despite being poor and falling far short of expectations, was at least sufficient to narrowly escape the brink of relegation and survive for at least one more season in the top flight (Berita Yudha, 1995d, p. x).

However, the hope of remaining in the top flight was short-lived, as the 1995-1996 competition season, or Ligin II, marked the end of Persegres' journey on the national football stage, a tragic final chapter. The management had initially attempted to revive supporter optimism by targeting several renowned coaches, such as Anatoly Polosin, Ivan Toplak, and M. Basri (Berita Yudha, 1995e, p. x, 1995f, p. x) as well as star players Jackson F. Tiago, to strengthen the squad (Berita Yudha, 1995g, p. 10). Unfortunately, these efforts did not yield the desired results, leading to the reappointment of Bertje Matulapelwa as head coach (Berita Yudha, 1995h, p. 10). He faced an exceptionally grueling season devoid of high-quality and adequate player support.

Persegres' performance during this season was further tarnished by an off-pitch incident, in which their player, Agus Jamal, was proven to have physically assaulted a referee and was subsequently penalized with a two-year suspension, adding to the extensive list of problems

confronting the team (Berita Yudha, 1996, p. 11). With a steadily declining performance and waning morale, Persegres ultimately concluded the 1995-1996 season as the 'cellar dwellers' (bottom-placed team) of the Eastern Division. They managed to secure only 15 points, trailing significantly behind the teams above them, and recorded a dismal record with the fewest victories and the highest number of goals conceded among all contestants, a clear indication of a team in decline that the new management failed to anticipate or rectify (Bali Post, 1996, p. 16).

This relegation was a direct consequence of the diminishing role of PT Petrokimia Gresik as the primary supporting entity. Since the unification of Galatama and *Perserikatan* into the Indonesian League, the corporation's focus had shifted toward Petrokimia Putra, viewed as its 'biological offspring' and deemed more strategically significant. This shift in priorities automatically reduced the allocation of resources and attention toward Persegres, which was subsequently forced to struggle independently with limited support from the local government. Furthermore, Persegres' finest players were increasingly recruited by Petrokimia Putra with ease, leaving the team with a younger, less experienced squad due to the lack of financial backing. These conditions were directly proportional to the drastic decline in Persegres' performance, from a top-tier team in the *Perserikatan* Premier Division to sinking to the bottom of the Indonesian League standings, eventually vanishing for years from the national football landscape.

IV. CONCLUSION

This research comprehensively delineates the central and multidimensional role of PT Petrokimia Gresik in the development of football in Gresik during the period of 1978 to 1996. The study finds that, despite the absence of legally binding Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) regulations at the time, the Company strategically adopted social responsibility principles through significant investments in sporting infrastructure, management, and athlete development. These efforts not only succeeded in propelling Persegres from an underestimated local team to promotion into the Premier Division in 1988 but also served as an effective instrument for cultivating a positive corporate image, managing social dynamics surrounding the industry, and mitigating potential criticism. However, the key findings also demonstrate that this success was fragile; the decline and eventual relegation of Persegres in 1995-1996 were precipitated by a combination of external factors, such as shifts in the national competition structure and diminishing corporate financial support, as well as internal factors including conflict, player exodus, and incidents of supporter violence, which collectively underscore the necessity of consistent and stable corporate backing for the sustainability of a sporting entity.

These findings not only reveal the historical details of Persegres' journey but also provide a significant contribution across several aspects. Conceptually, this research enriches the understanding of the evolution of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices in Indonesia,

demonstrating that social responsibility principles were strategically implemented by State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) long before the existence of a mandatory legal framework, aligning with the mandate of nation-building. Methodologically, the application of a historical approach combined with Bowen's CSR framework enables an in-depth analysis of the complex interactions between economic entities (corporations), sporting communities, and local socio-political dynamics. Furthermore, theoretically, this study offers a rich case study on how sports, particularly football, can serve as an instrument for corporate promotion and social management, while simultaneously highlighting the fragility of this support model when faced with structural changes and internal as well as external challenges, thus filling a research gap that previously overlooked the specific role of PT Petrokimia Gresik in the history of Persegres in a holistic manner.

Nevertheless, as with any historical inquiry, this study possesses several limitations that may serve as directions for future research. The primary constraint lies in the access to internal corporate primary sources, such as financial reports, board of directors' meeting minutes, or internal memoranda from PT Petrokimia Gresik. The absence of such data precluded a profound analysis of financial motivations, specific budget allocations, and the company's internal decision-making processes. Consequently, future research could deepen this analysis by seeking access to these internal documents or conducting in-depth interviews with key figures from the corporate management of that era. Furthermore, further exploration regarding the long-term impact of this sport-based CSR model on the identity of the Gresik community, or comparative study with corporate support models in the other Indonesian football clubs during the same period, could provide broader and more comparative insights.

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