



A comparison of VO₂max response of 15-year-old soccer athletes based on training time in the tropical climate of Bima

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ABSTRACT

Background: VO₂max is the primary indicator of a soccer athlete's aerobic capacity, but in tropical climates like Bima, high temperatures and humidity can affect VO₂max achievement. Hence, the timing of training is an important factor to consider.

Objectives: This study aims to analyze differences in VO₂max across training times (morning and afternoon) in 15-year-old youth soccer athletes from the Bima Football Association (PERSSEBI).

Methods: The study used a quantitative, comparative, cross-sectional observational design. The study subjects were 45 athletes (age 15.31±0.46; height 163.12±4.35 cm; weight 55.28±3.67 kg; and body mass index (BMI) 20.78±1.18 kg/m²) from the Bima Football Association (PERSEBI), selected by purposive sampling, and divided into morning (n=23) and afternoon (n=22) training groups. VO₂max was measured using a multistage fitness test (Bleep Test). Data analysis included descriptive statistics, the Shapiro–Wilk normality test, the Levene homogeneity test, and the independent-samples t-test at a significance level of 0.05, using IBM SPSS 25.

Results: The descriptive analysis showed that the average VO₂max of the morning group was 43.78 ± 2.34 ml/kg/minute, higher than that of the afternoon group (42.91 ± 2.29 ml/kg/minute). The results of the independent sample t-test showed that there was a significant difference in VO₂max between the two groups with a t value = 2.14 with df = 43 and a significant p value = 0.04 (p < 0.05) with an average difference of 0.87 ml/kg/minute indicating that the morning exercise group had a higher Vo2max value than the afternoon exercise group.

Conclusions: These findings suggest that training time contributes to differences in athletes' VO₂max values in tropical environments, with morning training resulting in higher performance than afternoon training. Therefore, scheduling training that accounts for environmental conditions is crucial for optimizing athletes' VO₂max.

Keywords: physiological adaptations, young soccer athletes, VO₂max.

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INTRODUCTION

VO₂max is a key indicator of an athlete's aerobic capacity and cardiorespiratory fitness. It plays an important role in supporting sports performance, especially in football, which demands high physical endurance throughout the match (Ansori et al., 2024). Athletes with high VO₂max are better able to maintain game intensity, accelerate recovery, and maintain optimal performance throughout the competition. Therefore, developing a systematic, structured, and sustainable training program is an important factor in improving an athlete's aerobic capacity and physical fitness (Simanjuntak et al., 2022). One approach that can be used is through training activities designed in the form of games or structured physical activities as a stimulus to increase fitness (Firdaus & Irfan, 2023), such as variations in training methods that can improve the physical condition component of agility (Pembanyu & Wiyanto, 2025).

However, an athlete's VO₂max capacity is influenced not only by training method but also by environmental factors, especially the climatic conditions in which training takes place (Apriantono et al., 2020). Indonesia, as a tropical region with high temperatures and humidity, places additional physiological stress on athletes. These conditions can affect the efficiency of the cardiovascular and respiratory systems, thereby altering the body's response to exercise (Pelletier et al., 2023). Athletes who train in hot environments tend to experience increased core body temperature and heart rate (Périard et al., 2021) and greater dehydration than athletes in cold climates (Bassett & Howley, 2023). Long-term exposure to high temperatures can also reduce muscle oxygen efficiency and increase cardiac workload, with implications for aerobic capacity (Nybo et al., 2024).

Empirical conditions in the Bima region, West Nusa Tenggara Province, with average daytime and evening temperatures of 29–30°C, indicate that environmental factors may influence athlete performance. Based on initial interviews with football coaches from the Bima Football Association (PERSEBI), 15-year-old athletes tended to experience a decline in performance after the first 45 minutes of play. This indicates limited aerobic capacity, possibly related to athletes' VO₂max achievement under tropical training conditions.

Given these conditions, effective training management is important to support aerobic capacity and minimize environmental impacts on athletes' VO₂max (Crandall & Johnson, 2023). Factors such as blood volume, heart function, thermoregulation efficiency, and body fluid balance are known to influence VO₂max during physical activity (Sawka et al., 2022). In addition, temperature and humidity are related to thermoregulation. In addition, temperature and humidity conditions are also related to thermoregulation aspects (Maunder et al., 2021), energy metabolism (Melin et al., 2024), respiratory system and oxygen utilization (So et al., 2024), and hydration and electrolyte balance (Luetkens et al., 2023), which indirectly affect the athlete's aerobic performance.

In this context, training time is a relevant variable to study, as differences in environmental conditions between morning and evening in tropical regions can affect VO₂max. Lower air temperatures in the morning than in the afternoon improve cardiorespiratory efficiency. Although various studies have examined improvements in VO₂max through training interventions, research comparing VO₂max based on

training time under natural conditions in tropical environments remains limited. This study offers a novel ecological perspective by examining $VO_2\text{max}$ differences across naturally occurring training times (morning vs. afternoon) without experimental intervention, in a tropical environment where daily climatic variations may influence aerobic performance.

Thus, this study aims to analyze differences in $VO_2\text{max}$, an indicator of aerobic capacity, among 15-year-old adolescent athletes based on training time in a tropical climate. The results are expected to provide practical contributions to coaches and sports practitioners in designing more optimal training patterns tailored to environmental characteristics.

METHODS

Study Design and Participants

This research is a quantitative, cross-sectional study aimed at comparing $VO_2\text{max}$ among 15-year-old soccer athletes based on different training durations in a tropical climate (Bima). The study was an observational, untreated study that observed natural training patterns. The research subjects were 45 soccer athletes from the Bima Football Association (PERSEBI) club, Bima Regency, West Nusa Tenggara, selected by purposive sampling and grouped into 23 athletes in the morning training group and 22 in the afternoon training group, in accordance with the club's routine training schedule. The characteristics of the participants were an average age of 15.31 ± 0.46 years, height of 163.12 ± 4.35 cm, weight of 55.28 ± 3.67 kg, and BMI of 20.78 ± 1.18 kg/m^2 . In general, these characteristics reflect physical conditions within the normal range for 15-year-old male adolescents participating in soccer activities in the Bima area. The study was conducted for one month in October 2025, with training held four times per week according to the club's routine schedule.

Ethical approval statement

All procedures performed in this study adhered to established ethical guidelines for human research, including the Declaration of Helsinki. Ethical clearance was granted by the Research Ethics Committee of STKIP Taman Siswa Bima (approval number: 70/002/STKIP-TSB/LPPM/X/2025). Participants were provided with detailed information regarding the study objectives and potential risks, and written informed consent was obtained prior to data collection.

Research Instruments

The research instrument used a multistage fitness test (Bleep Test) to measure aerobic capacity via $VO_2\text{max}$ estimation ($\text{ml}/\text{kg}/\text{min}$), with this as the only research variable observed from differences in training time. The bleep test has high validity, with a coefficient ranging from 0.90 to 0.95, and is performed by running a 20-meter round-trip at a gradual pace until maximum fatigue. $VO_2\text{max}$ values are obtained from the athlete's final level and number of shuttle runs, then converted using a standard table. To minimize bias, all measurements are carried out consistently with uniform procedures, instruments, and environmental conditions.

Procedures

1. Initial Condition Standardization

The data collection process began with a standardization phase, during which all athletes were ensured to be in a relatively uniform physical condition, such as having adequate rest and not engaging in strenuous physical activity within 24 hours of the measurement. This phase aimed to minimize bias that could affect the VO₂max measurement results.

2. Initial Measurements

Initial measurements were conducted at the first meeting, with training times adjusted for each group: 7:00 a.m. for the morning training group and 4:00 p.m. for the afternoon training group. This phase aimed to obtain an initial picture of the athletes' aerobic capacity as a basis for comparison.

3. Training Observation Period

In the second and third meetings, researchers observed routine training activities conducted according to the club's program. No additional treatment was provided at this stage, so the observed conditions reflected the natural and actual training situation.

4. Implementation of Final Measurements

The final measurements were conducted at the fourth session using the same procedures as the initial measurements, including instruments, location, and timing. Consistency in measurement times (morning remained morning, afternoon remained afternoon) was maintained to minimize the influence of circadian rhythms on athlete performance. The data obtained were then used to analyze the difference in VO₂max between the morning and afternoon training groups as an indicator of the difference.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using descriptive analysis to describe the initial data. After that, prerequisite tests were conducted using the Shapiro-Wilk normality test and Levene's test for homogeneity of variances. The final stage was a comparative inferential analysis using an independent-samples t-test. All statistical tests were conducted at a significance level of $p < 0.05$ using IBM SPSS version 25 software.

RESULTS

This study aims to analyze differences in VO₂max values among 15-year-old soccer athletes based on training time in a tropical climate, namely morning and afternoon. The results of the descriptive statistical analysis, which provide a general picture of VO₂max values for 15-year-old soccer athletes after the pretest and posttest, by time group, are shown in [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Results of Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Pretest-Posttest Vo2max of Athletes

Group	Test	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Morning Exercise	Pretest	23	38.62	2.11	35.10	42.00
	Posttest	23	43.78	2.34	40.20	47.50
Afternoon Exercise	Pretest	22	37.95	2.08	34.80	41.70
	Posttest	22	42.91	2.29	39.60	46.80

An overview of VO₂max values based on exercise groups is presented in [Table 1](#) above. In general, the data show a difference in average VO₂max values between the

morning and afternoon exercise groups at the final measurement, with the morning group tending to have higher values than the afternoon group. Before conducting the comparison test, the data were first tested for normality using the Shapiro-Wilk test.

Table 2. Result Test of Normality (Shapiro-Wilk)

Group	Statistic	df	Sig.
Morning Exercise	0.11	23	0.11
Afternoon Exercise	0.09	22	0.09

Note: $p > 0.05$ indicates statistical significance

In [Table 2](#), the Shapiro-Wilk normality test results indicate that all data have p-values greater than 0.05. This indicates that the $VO_2\text{max}$ data in both groups are normally distributed, thus meeting the assumptions for parametric analysis. Next, a homogeneity-of-variance test was conducted using Levene's test.

Table 3. Results Levene's for Equality of Variances

	F	df1	df2	Sig.
$VO_2\text{max}$ Posttest	0.684	1	43	0.412

Note: $p < 0.05$ indicates statistical significance

The Levene test showed a p-value of 0.412 ($p > 0.05$) ([Table 3](#)), indicating that the variances of the two groups were homogeneous. With the normality and homogeneity assumptions met, the comparative analysis can proceed using the independent-samples t-test. A comparison test was conducted to determine differences in $VO_2\text{max}$ values between athletes in each group. [Table 4](#) shows the results of the comparison t-test.

Table 4. Results of the Independent Sample T-test $Vo_2\text{max}$ of Athletes

Variable	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
$VO_2\text{max}$ Posttest	2.14	43	0.04	0.87

Note: $p < 0.05$ indicates statistical significance

The results of the independent sample t-test showed a t-value of 2.14 with $df = 43$ and a significance value of $p = 0.04$ ($p < 0.05$). This finding indicates a statistically significant difference in $VO_2\text{max}$ values between the morning and afternoon exercise groups. The average difference of 0.87 ml/kg/minute indicates that the morning exercise group had a higher $VO_2\text{max}$ value than the afternoon exercise group.

Overall, the analysis results showed a difference in $VO_2\text{max}$ values between the morning and afternoon training groups in 15-year-old PERSEBI (BIMA FOOTBALL UNIT) soccer athletes. This difference reflects the variance in athletes' $VO_2\text{max}$ levels resulting from training time in tropical climates. The morning training group tended to show higher $VO_2\text{max}$ values than the afternoon training group, indicating that training time influences athletes' aerobic capacity. Thus, these findings confirm that variations in environmental conditions across different training times can affect athletes' $VO_2\text{max}$, without generalizing these changes to a specific fitness level.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that training time is a significant factor in determining differences in athletes' $VO_2\text{max}$ values. The superiority of the morning

training group indicates that the relatively more stable environmental conditions in the morning result in a lower thermal load, allowing the cardiovascular system to work more efficiently to meet oxygen demands during physical activity. In this context, circadian rhythms and metabolic efficiency in the morning are thought to contribute to achieving more optimal $VO_2\text{max}$, particularly in tropical climates characterized by high temperatures and humidity. Therefore, the differences found not only reflect variations in $VO_2\text{max}$ values but also underscore the importance of synchronizing training time and body condition to support the aerobic performance of adolescent athletes.

These findings align with previous studies that highlight the influence of environmental conditions on $VO_2\text{max}$ during physical activity in tropical climates. These bioclimatic conditions involve relatively high temperatures and humidity (Ma et al., 2023). Potentially increased heat load during exercise, particularly in the afternoon, due to accumulated solar radiation. This situation can trigger competition for blood flow between the skin for cooling and skeletal muscles for mechanical activity, ultimately affecting the efficiency of oxygen utilization (Hudain, 2024). Conversely, lower ambient temperatures in the morning provide a more favorable thermal gradient, enabling athletes to maintain physical activity more efficiently.

From a physiological perspective, these findings are also supported by the concept that circadian rhythms influence aerobic metabolism (Bahtra et al., 2023). Although some studies suggest that physical performance can peak in the afternoon, in a tropical climate, higher heat exposure could be a limiting factor (Inzaghi et al., 2025). This condition can increase the risk of dehydration and reduce cardiovascular efficiency, especially in adolescent athletes whose thermoregulatory systems have not yet developed optimally (Plakias et al., 2024). Therefore, training in more moderate environmental conditions, such as early morning, is likely to support $VO_2\text{max}$ stability without imposing excessive thermal load (Feng et al., 2024).

In addition, research by Hanief et al. (2025) found that approximately 45% of young soccer athletes exhibit hamstring impulse imbalances, which may increase injury risk. These findings reinforce the notion that adolescent athletes are still in a phase of physiological and neuromuscular development that is vulnerable to training stress. Therefore, timing training sessions that consider environmental conditions is crucial not only to support $VO_2\text{max}$ achievement but also to minimize the risk of physical impairment. Other research also shows that pulmonary oxygen diffusion efficiency tends to be higher during early training sessions in high-humidity environments (Clemente et al., 2023), which aligns with this study's findings.

In practice, the results of this study imply that determining training timing should be part of the athlete development program planning in tropical regions. Scheduling training in the morning may be a more adaptive strategy for maintaining $VO_2\text{max}$ during training activities. Theoretically, these findings enrich sports science research, particularly regarding the relationship between environmental factors and aerobic performance. This is also relevant to the concept of long-term athlete development (LTAD), which emphasizes adapting training loads to individual and environmental conditions (Kuswoyo, 2023).

Limitations of the study

However, this study has limitations, particularly in controlling for external variables such as athletes' sleep patterns and nutritional intake, which could potentially influence conditions during VO₂max measurements. Furthermore, variations in specific humidity at the study location (Bima) are also dynamic. Future research is recommended to integrate biochemical parametric measurements, such as hemoglobin levels or oxygen saturation, using the latest sensor technology, as recommended by Zoila et al. (2025). In addition, further exploration of the long-term effects of morning training patterns on competitive performance in real soccer matches is needed to expand the generalizability of these findings.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that training time is a contextual factor associated with differences in VO₂max values among adolescent soccer athletes in tropical environments, with morning training tending to provide more favorable conditions than afternoon training, thus resulting in higher VO₂max levels. These findings emphasize the importance of integrating training load and environmental conditions into the planning of athlete development programs. In practice, coaches are advised to prioritize morning aerobic training to optimize VO₂max while minimizing the impact of environmental heat stress. Future research should control for external variables such as sleep patterns, nutritional intake, and hydration. It should also integrate additional physiological measurements and longitudinal designs to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing VO₂max in adolescent athletes in tropical regions.

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AI DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

During the preparation of the manuscript, the authors used ChatGPT-5.3, OpenAI, as an aid in language editing, sentence structure improvement, and scientific narrative development. AI is not used in data collection or analysis. The entire manuscript has been reviewed and edited by the authors, who take full responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of the research.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The datasets generated and analyzed during this study, including VO₂max measurements and statistical analysis results, are available from the corresponding

author upon reasonable request. However, the data are not publicly accessible due to ethical and privacy considerations, as they contain sensitive information about individual adolescent participants' performance.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

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