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THE SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF JRC COMMUNITY AS A SPACE FOR RECREATION AND SOCIAL INTERACTION IN URBAN AREAS: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE JAKARTA RC RALLY COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

Urbanization has reduced opportunities for informal social interaction, making hobby communities increasingly important as alternative spaces for recreation and social engagement. This study aims to analyze the social functions of the Jakarta RC Rally Community (JRC) as a remote control car community in urban areas using Malinowski's functionalist perspective. A qualitative ethnographic approach was employed through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify the community's social functions. The findings indicate that JRC serves not only as a recreational space but also as a medium for strengthening social interaction, solidarity, mutual trust, and the exchange of knowledge and technical skills among members. The community also fosters a collective identity that encourages long-term participation and social cohesion. These findings demonstrate that hobby communities function as cultural institutions that fulfill both individual and collective social needs in urban society. This study contributes to urban anthropology by extending the application of Malinowski's functionalism to contemporary hobby communities and highlights the role of community-based recreational activities in strengthening social relationships within metropolitan environments.

Keywords: *ethnography; functionalism; hobby community; remote control car community; social interaction; urban recreation.*

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INTRODUCTION

Urbanization has transformed cities into spaces characterized by high population density, intensive mobility, and increasing social complexity. While urban development provides economic opportunities and improved infrastructure, it also reduces opportunities for informal social interaction and community engagement. As urban residents experience increasing work pressure and limited recreational spaces, community-based leisure activities have become an important mechanism for maintaining social cohesion, psychological well-being, and interpersonal relationships. Hobby communities have emerged as alternative social spaces where individuals voluntarily gather based on shared interests, creating environments that facilitate communication, cooperation, and mutual support (Putnam, 2000; Stebbins, 2020).

One of the rapidly growing forms of urban leisure communities in Indonesia is the remote control (RC) car community. Unlike recreational activities that are performed individually, participation in RC car communities requires continuous interaction among members through collaborative practice sessions, competitions, technical discussions, and collective problem-solving. These activities not only satisfy recreational needs but also strengthen interpersonal trust, solidarity, and shared identity among participants. Consequently, the community functions as a social institution that fulfills various individual and collective needs beyond the hobby itself.

From an anthropological perspective, community activities cannot merely be understood as recreational behavior. According to Malinowski's functionalism, every cultural institution develops because it performs essential functions in satisfying human needs, both biological and social (Malinowski, 1944). Communities therefore represent cultural institutions whose existence contributes to maintaining social order, transmitting knowledge, strengthening solidarity, and fulfilling psychological needs. Within this perspective, hobby communities become important objects of anthropological inquiry because they illustrate how cultural practices operate in contemporary urban society.

Previous studies have highlighted the significance of leisure communities in developing social relationships, social capital, and community participation. Punch et al. (2022) demonstrate that serious leisure activities encourage long-term commitment and reinforce collective identity among participants. Likewise, Hallmann et al. (2023) show that participation in leisure-based communities contributes to the development of trust, cooperation, and social capital through repeated social interaction. Recent studies also indicate that urban recreational communities increasingly function as spaces for strengthening social networks and improving individual well-being in modern cities (Vongvisitsin et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2025).

Despite the growing body of literature on leisure communities, most previous research has concentrated on sports clubs, tourism communities, volunteer organizations, or online communities. Empirical studies examining remote control car communities remain limited, particularly in the Indonesian urban context. Existing studies generally emphasize leisure participation, community management, or recreational motivation, while relatively little attention has been devoted to understanding the broader social functions performed by hobby communities from an anthropological perspective. Consequently, there is limited empirical evidence explaining how hobby communities operate as cultural institutions that facilitate recreation, social interaction, knowledge exchange, solidarity, and identity formation within urban environments.

This study addresses this gap by examining the Jakarta RC Rally Community through the lens of Malinowski's functionalism. Rather than focusing solely on hobby participation, the study investigates how the community functions as a social institution that fulfills members' recreational, social, and cultural needs. Through an ethnographic approach, the research explores everyday interactions, collective activities, and shared meanings developed within the community. This perspective extends previous studies by positioning hobby communities not

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merely as leisure groups but as functional cultural institutions within contemporary urban society.

The novelty of this research lies in integrating Malinowski's functionalist theory with ethnographic analysis of an urban hobby community in Indonesia. While previous studies have primarily employed perspectives of social capital or serious leisure, this research demonstrates that the Jakarta RC Rally Community performs multiple social functions simultaneously, including providing recreational opportunities, facilitating social interaction, strengthening solidarity, transmitting knowledge and technical skills, and fostering collective identity. This multidimensional perspective contributes to the broader understanding of community studies within urban anthropology.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the social functions of the Jakarta RC Rally Community as a space for recreation and social interaction in urban areas using an ethnographic approach. The findings are expected to enrich anthropological discussions concerning contemporary hobby communities and provide empirical evidence regarding the contribution of community-based leisure activities to urban social life.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Malinowski's Functionalism

Functionalism is one of the major perspectives in anthropology that explains culture as an integrated system in which every institution performs specific functions to satisfy human needs. Bronislaw Malinowski argued that cultural institutions exist because they contribute to fulfilling both biological and derived social needs, including security, cooperation, education, and social integration (Malinowski, 1944). Rather than viewing culture merely as a collection of traditions, functionalism emphasizes the practical roles of social institutions in maintaining the continuity and stability of society.

According to Malinowski (1944), social institutions develop through repeated interactions among individuals and become mechanisms for addressing common needs. Community organizations, therefore, should not only be understood as voluntary associations but also as cultural institutions that facilitate communication, mutual support, cooperation, and the transmission of knowledge. Within this perspective, the sustainability of a community depends on its ability to provide meaningful social functions for its members.

In contemporary urban settings, hobby communities represent modern forms of cultural institutions. Although established around shared recreational interests, these communities perform broader social functions by creating opportunities for interaction, cooperation, solidarity, and collective identity. Therefore, Malinowski's functionalism provides an appropriate theoretical framework for understanding how the Jakarta RC Rally Community contributes to the social lives of its members beyond recreational activities.

Hobby Communities and Serious Leisure

Hobby communities are voluntary groups formed by individuals who share common interests and participate regularly in recreational activities. Unlike casual leisure participation, hobby communities involve long-term commitment, skill development, and continuous interaction among members. Stebbins (2020) conceptualizes this phenomenon as serious leisure, referring to the systematic pursuit of an enjoyable activity in which participants invest considerable time, effort, and knowledge while developing a distinctive social identity.

Serious leisure extends beyond entertainment because participants gradually acquire specialized skills, establish social networks, and build long-lasting interpersonal relationships. Previous studies demonstrate that serious leisure encourages commitment, mutual learning, and collaborative participation within communities (Punch et al., 2022). Likewise, Hallmann et al. (2023) found that regular participation in leisure-based communities strengthens trust, reciprocity, and social capital through repeated interaction.

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Within remote control car communities, serious leisure is reflected in members' continuous participation in practice sessions, competitions, technical discussions, and collaborative maintenance of RC vehicles. These collective activities reinforce members' commitment while simultaneously creating opportunities for friendship, cooperation, and knowledge sharing.

Social Interaction in Urban Communities

Urban communities play an increasingly important role in maintaining social relationships amid the challenges of modern city life. Rapid urbanization often reduces opportunities for informal interaction because of high mobility, occupational demands, and limited communal spaces. Consequently, community-based activities have become important mechanisms for strengthening interpersonal communication and social cohesion.

Social interaction within communities is characterized by repeated communication, cooperation, trust, and mutual assistance. Putnam (2000) argues that participation in voluntary associations enhances civic engagement and strengthens social networks through reciprocal relationships. Similarly, Bourdieu (1986) views social relationships as valuable resources that enable individuals to access support, knowledge, and opportunities through their participation in social groups.

Recent studies further indicate that urban leisure communities contribute to improving individual well-being by fostering friendship, collective identity, and community resilience (Vongvisitsin et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2025). Therefore, hobby communities function not only as recreational spaces but also as social environments that promote interaction and strengthen interpersonal relationships in urban society.

Conceptual Framework

Based on Malinowski's functionalism, the Jakarta RC Rally Community can be understood as a cultural institution that fulfills multiple social needs through organized recreational activities. Participation in community activities facilitates communication, cooperation, and knowledge exchange, which subsequently strengthen solidarity and collective identity among members. In this study, the social functions of the community are examined through five interrelated dimensions: recreation, social interaction, knowledge sharing, solidarity, and collective identity. These dimensions provide the analytical framework for interpreting how the community contributes to the social lives of its members within the context of urban society.



Figure 1. Conceptual Framework
Source: Processed by the author

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Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of this study based on Malinowski's functionalism. The Jakarta RC Rally Community (JRC) is conceptualized as a cultural institution that fulfills members' social needs through hobby-based activities. The study examines five key social functions—recreation, social interaction, knowledge sharing, solidarity, and collective identity—which collectively explain how the community contributes to social cohesion and meaningful interaction in an urban context. This framework guides the analysis of the ethnographic findings presented in this study

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design using an ethnographic approach to explore the social functions of the Jakarta RC Rally Community (JRC). Ethnography was selected because it enables an in-depth understanding of social interactions, shared meanings, and everyday practices within a natural community setting (Spradley, 1980). The study was guided by Malinowski's functionalist perspective, which views community activities as cultural institutions that fulfill individual and collective social needs.

The research was conducted within the Jakarta RC Rally Community, one of the largest remote control (RC) car communities in Jakarta. The community was selected because of its active participation in regular practice sessions, competitions, technical discussions, and social gatherings, providing a rich context for examining the social functions of an urban hobby community.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, focusing on individuals who had actively participated in community activities for at least one year and possessed sufficient experience to explain the community's routines, values, and interactions. The study involved 12 key informants, consisting of the community founder, administrators, senior members, and active participants. This composition enabled the collection of diverse perspectives regarding the community's development and social dynamics.

Data were collected between January and March 2026 through three complementary techniques. First, participant observation was conducted during routine gatherings, practice sessions, competitions, and informal discussions to understand patterns of interaction and community participation. Second, semi-structured in-depth interviews explored participants' experiences, motivations, and perceptions of the community's social functions. Third, document analysis was undertaken using community archives, photographs, social media content, and event documentation to complement the observational and interview data.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six-stage procedure: familiarization with the data, initial coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. The analysis focused on identifying recurring themes related to the community's social functions, including recreation, social interaction, knowledge sharing, solidarity, and collective identity. These themes were subsequently interpreted using Malinowski's functionalist framework to explain how the community fulfills members' social and cultural needs.

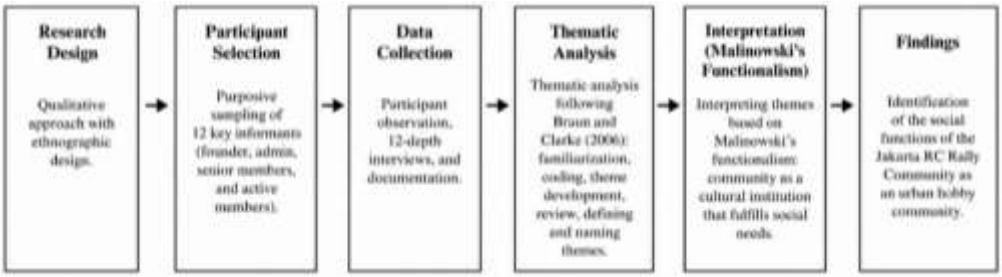


Figure 2. Reseach Design
Source: Processed by the author

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To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking. Information obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation was compared to verify consistency, while several participants were invited to review the preliminary findings to confirm the accuracy of the interpretations. Ethical principles were maintained throughout the research by obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring voluntary participation, and protecting participants' anonymity and confidentiality.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSS

Recreation as a Psychological Function of the Community

The ethnographic findings indicate that **recreation** is the primary function perceived by members of the Jakarta RC Rally Community (JRC). Although participants initially joined because of their interest in RC cars, continuous participation is largely driven by the psychological benefits gained through community activities. Regular competitions, practice sessions, and informal gatherings provide opportunities for members to relieve stress, enjoy leisure time, and temporarily escape the pressures of urban life.

The interviews support these observations. Teguh Indarmaji, Chairman of JRC, described the community as an important source of recreation that helps him maintain emotional well-being amid work responsibilities:

> *"I have always enjoyed this hobby because it serves as a form of recreation amid my daily routine. Before negotiating with clients, I usually spend a full day participating in an RC competition. Afterwards, I sleep well, wake up feeling refreshed, and am mentally prepared for work the next day."* (P3, Chairman, Interview, January 2024)

Similarly, Riyan Nur Ramadhan emphasized that JRC provides not only a place to pursue his hobby but also a comfortable environment where he can relax and socialize with people who share similar interests:

> *"I feel comfortable here. I can pursue my hobby, make new friends, have a place to relax, and spend time with people who share the same passion."* (P5, Interview, January 2024)

From the perspective of Malinowski's functionalism, these findings demonstrate that recreational activities constitute an essential cultural function that fulfills members' psychological needs. The community provides more than leisure entertainment; it enables individuals to restore emotional balance while strengthening interpersonal relationships through shared recreational experiences.

These findings support Stebbins (2020), who argues that serious leisure contributes to personal fulfillment and psychological well-being, as well as Hallmann et al. (2023), who found that participation in recreational communities enhances life satisfaction and social connectedness. Extending these studies, the present research shows that recreation within JRC functions as a cultural mechanism that helps urban residents cope with occupational stress while sustaining long-term community participation.

Overall, JRC functions as a recreational institution that promotes psychological well-being and serves as the foundation for other community functions, including social interaction, knowledge sharing, solidarity, and collective identity.

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Social Interaction and Network Formation

Beyond its recreational function, the Jakarta RC Rally Community (JRC) serves as an important platform for social interaction and network formation. The ethnographic findings indicate that members do not merely gather to participate in RC competitions but also develop meaningful interpersonal relationships through regular meetings, training sessions, and community events. These interactions foster trust, friendship, and mutual support among individuals from diverse occupational and social backgrounds.

The interviews demonstrate that social relationships developed within JRC frequently extend beyond hobby-related activities. Daniel Irwansyah explained that joining the community enabled him to establish valuable personal and professional connections:

> *"Joining this community has allowed me to meet new people and even build new business opportunities. One of the members eventually became my business partner."* (P1, Interview, January 2024)

Similarly, Muhammad Ismail emphasized that JRC was intentionally developed as a place where members could build relationships rather than simply participate in competitions:

> *"We designed JRC as a place where people can gather, pursue their hobby, and build friendships. We are happy when members eventually collaborate in business or support each other professionally."* (P4, Interview, January 2024)

These findings suggest that the community functions as a social institution that facilitates the formation of interpersonal networks. From the perspective of Malinowski's functionalism, social interaction represents one of the mechanisms through which cultural institutions satisfy individuals' social needs. Through regular communication and shared experiences, JRC creates an environment where members develop reciprocal relationships that extend beyond recreational activities.

The findings are consistent with Putnam (2000), who argues that voluntary associations strengthen social capital by fostering trust and reciprocal relationships. They also support Hallmann et al. (2023), who found that participation in recreational communities enhances social connectedness and community engagement. Unlike previous studies that primarily examine social interaction as an outcome of leisure participation, this study demonstrates that interpersonal relationships constitute one of the essential social functions sustaining the long-term existence of an urban hobby community.

Overall, JRC functions not only as a recreational club but also as a social network that promotes friendship, collaboration, and social cohesion among its members. This interaction strengthens members' sense of belonging and provides the foundation for the development of other community functions, including knowledge sharing and solidarity.

Knowledge Sharing and Informal Learning

The ethnographic findings reveal that the Jakarta RC Rally Community (JRC) functions as an important space for knowledge sharing and informal learning. Beyond recreational activities, members actively exchange technical knowledge, driving techniques, vehicle modifications, and maintenance skills during regular gatherings and competitions. This continuous interaction enables both novice and experienced members to improve their competencies through direct observation and hands-on practice.

The interviews demonstrate that knowledge sharing is embedded in the community's daily activities. Teguh Indarmaji explained that experienced members consistently provide guidance to newcomers to ensure they can participate confidently in RC Rally activities:

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> *"We continuously educate new members by teaching them how to set up their RC cars, adjust the suspension, and improve their driving techniques. Everyone is encouraged to learn from one another."* (P3, Chairman, Interview, January 2024)

These findings indicate that learning within JRC occurs through collaborative interaction rather than formal instruction. From the perspective of Malinowski's functionalism, knowledge sharing represents a cultural function that supports the continuity of the community by transferring practical skills, shared values, and collective experience across members. Such informal learning enables the community to maintain its activities while continuously integrating new participants.

The findings are consistent with Wenger's concept of Communities of Practice, which emphasizes learning through participation in shared activities, as well as recent studies demonstrating that hobby communities facilitate experiential learning and skill development through peer interaction. Unlike formal education, knowledge transfer within JRC is voluntary, experience-based, and strengthened by mutual trust among members.

Overall, JRC serves not only as a recreational community but also as an informal learning environment where members collectively develop technical competence and practical knowledge. This continuous exchange of expertise contributes to the sustainability of the community while reinforcing members' commitment to shared recreational activities.

Solidarity and a Sense of Belonging

The ethnographic findings indicate that **solidarity** is one of the defining characteristics of the Jakarta RC Rally Community (JRC). Beyond sharing a common hobby, members develop strong interpersonal bonds through regular interaction, mutual assistance, and collective participation in community activities. This sense of togetherness encourages members to remain actively involved and contributes to the long-term sustainability of the community.

The interviews reveal that members perceive JRC as more than a hobby club. Riyan Nur Ramadhan emphasized that the welcoming atmosphere and family-like relationships were the main reasons he continued participating in the community:

> *"What makes me feel comfortable in JRC is the sense of family. The members are supportive, friendly, and always willing to help each other. That is why I continue to be part of this community."* (P5, Interview, January 2024)

These findings suggest that solidarity is cultivated through continuous interaction and shared experiences rather than formal organizational rules. From the perspective of Malinowski's functionalism, solidarity represents an essential social function that maintains cohesion within a cultural institution. The strong interpersonal relationships developed in JRC enable members to cooperate effectively, support one another, and preserve the continuity of community activities.

The findings are consistent with Putnam (2000), who argues that trust and reciprocity are fundamental elements of social capital, as well as recent studies demonstrating that voluntary hobby communities strengthen social cohesion through repeated interaction and shared experiences. In JRC, solidarity emerges naturally from collective participation, creating a supportive environment that reinforces members' commitment to the community.

Overall, JRC functions as a social institution that nurtures solidarity and a strong sense of belonging. These values not only strengthen interpersonal relationships but also provide the social foundation necessary for sustaining the community and its collective activities over time

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Collective Identity and Community Sustainability

The ethnographic findings demonstrate that the Jakarta RC Rally Community (JRC) has developed a strong **collective identity** among its members. Beyond participating in RC Rally activities, members identify themselves as part of a community that shares common values, interests, and long-term commitments. This shared identity strengthens members' attachment to the community and encourages their continued participation in collective activities.

The interviews indicate that JRC was established not only as a place for RC enthusiasts but also as a community that promotes friendship and mutual belonging. Muhammad Ismail explained:

> *"We established JRC as a place where people can gather, share the same hobby, and build a sense of togetherness. Our goal is not only to organize RC competitions but also to create a community where everyone feels accepted and valued."* (P4, Interview, January 2024)

These findings suggest that collective identity is formed through sustained participation in shared practices and social relationships. From the perspective of Malinowski's functionalism, cultural institutions endure because they foster common norms and values that bind individuals into a cohesive social group. In JRC, the shared enthusiasm for RC Rally extends beyond recreational interests and evolves into a collective identity that reinforces members' commitment to maintaining the community.

The findings are consistent with Tajfel and Turner's Social Identity Theory, which explains that individuals develop a sense of belonging through membership in meaningful social groups. They also support recent studies showing that hobby-based communities strengthen long-term participation by fostering shared identity, commitment, and emotional attachment among members. In the case of JRC, collective identity emerges as the outcome of continuous recreation, social interaction, knowledge sharing, and solidarity, all of which contribute to the sustainability of the community.

Overall, JRC functions not only as a recreational organization but also as a cultural community that cultivates a strong collective identity. This shared identity enables the community to maintain member engagement, preserve its organizational continuity, and adapt to the challenges of urban social life.

Synthesis of the Social Functions of the Jakarta RC Rally Community

The findings demonstrate that the social functions of the Jakarta RC Rally Community (JRC) are interconnected and collectively contribute to the sustainability of the community. Rather than operating as isolated functions, recreation, social interaction, knowledge sharing, solidarity, and collective identity form a dynamic process through which members satisfy their psychological and social needs while maintaining long-term engagement in the community. Table 1 summarizes the relationships among the five social functions identified in this study.

Table 1. Synthesis of the Social Functions of the Jakarta RC Rally Community

Social Function	Empirical Evidence	Contribution to Community Sustainability
Recreation	Leisure activities, stress relief, emotional recovery	Enhances psychological well-being and motivates continued participation
Social Interaction	Friendship, networking, regular communication	Strengthens social capital and interpersonal relationships
Knowledge Sharing	Exchange of technical skills and practical experience	Facilitates informal learning and competence development
Solidarity	Mutual assistance, trust, and family-like relationships	Reinforces group cohesion and collective commitment

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Social Function	Empirical Evidence	Contribution to Community Sustainability
Collective Identity	Shared values, belonging, and community pride	Sustains long-term participation and organizational continuity

Source: Processed by the author

The synthesis suggests that recreation serves as the entry point for community participation. As members engage in recreational activities, they gradually develop social relationships that facilitate the exchange of knowledge and practical experience. Continuous interaction subsequently strengthens solidarity, which ultimately evolves into a shared collective identity. This sequence illustrates how a hobby-based community develops from individual leisure participation into a cohesive social institution capable of sustaining long-term member engagement.

From the perspective of Malinowski's functionalism, these findings demonstrate that JRC fulfills multiple human needs simultaneously. Recreation addresses psychological well-being, social interaction fulfills the need for affiliation, knowledge sharing supports learning and adaptation, solidarity reinforces social cohesion, and collective identity provides members with a sense of belonging. The persistence of the community can therefore be understood as the result of its ability to perform these complementary social functions in an integrated manner.

This study extends the application of Malinowski's functionalist perspective by demonstrating that its explanatory value is not limited to traditional societies but also remains relevant for understanding contemporary urban hobby communities. The Jakarta RC Rally Community illustrates how voluntary leisure organizations function as cultural institutions that promote psychological well-being, strengthen social relationships, facilitate informal learning, and cultivate collective identity. These interconnected functions collectively explain the sustainability of hobby-based communities within an increasingly complex urban environment.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the social functions of the Jakarta RC Rally Community (JRC) through an ethnographic approach using Malinowski's functionalism as the analytical framework. The findings demonstrate that JRC functions as more than a hobby-based organization; it operates as a cultural institution that fulfills various psychological and social needs of its members. Five interconnected social functions were identified, namely recreation, social interaction, knowledge sharing, solidarity, and collective identity. Recreation serves as the initial motivation for participation, while continuous interaction facilitates knowledge exchange, strengthens solidarity, and ultimately develops a collective identity that sustains long-term community engagement.

The study contributes to the literature by extending the application of Malinowski's functionalism to the context of contemporary urban hobby communities. While functionalist theory has traditionally been applied to kinship systems and traditional societies, the findings demonstrate that it remains relevant for explaining the sustainability of voluntary leisure communities in urban settings. The Jakarta RC Rally Community illustrates how a shared recreational interest can evolve into a social institution that promotes psychological well-being, strengthens interpersonal relationships, facilitates informal learning, and reinforces members' sense of belonging.

Practically, the findings suggest that hobby communities should be recognized as valuable social spaces that contribute to individual well-being and community cohesion. Local governments, community organizations, and recreational associations may support the development of similar communities by providing accessible public spaces and encouraging collaborative recreational activities that foster social inclusion and civic engagement.

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This study is limited to a single ethnographic case within one urban hobby community in Jakarta. Consequently, the findings cannot be generalized to all hobby-based communities. Future research may compare different hobby communities across cultural settings or employ mixed-method approaches to examine how social functions influence community sustainability and member well-being in broader social contexts.

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