



The swear word “Anjing” as a tool of dehumanization: A study of Indonesia football supporters’ behaviour

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Abstract

The relationship between humans and animals in the context of sports reveals intriguing insights into human behaviour. Dogs, once a symbol and a mascot, have now experienced a troubling shift. They are subjected to swearing by Indonesian football supporters, expressing emotions during matches using the swear word “Anjing” (meaning “dogs” in English). This study aims to analyse the meaning and impact of such swearing on supporters’ behaviour. Applying the theory of Dehumanization and Ethnography of Communication, this research employed participants observation, in-depth interviews, and document studies. Observing supporters’ behaviour during twenty-one football matches from January 2022 to June 2023, and interviewing five football supporters, the study explores the meaning behind swearing behaviour. The findings revealed that the swear word “Anjing” represents a form tool of dehumanization indicating diverse characteristics adaptable to various subjects. The primary intention is to dehumanize opposing supporters. This choice of swearing target can degrade human subjects compared to animals, particularly in Indonesia, where dogs are associated with uncleanness and thievery in religious and cultural contexts. Using “Anjing” in swearing may incite verbal retaliation and potential escalation to violence. A novelty from this study shows that animals can become objects of profanity, serving as a tool form of dehumanization. Especially in Indonesia, dogs, which are associated positively elsewhere, are transformed into derogatory objects to demean humans. In conclusion, this study sheds light on the complex implications of employing “Anjing” as profanity, highlighting the intertwining of sociocultural beliefs with sporting expressions and its impact on supporter behaviour.

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Introduction

The present study centres on Indonesia, where the phenomenon of swearing and cursing constitutes a subject of inquiry with diverse objects that metaphorically exemplify such expressions. These objects, ranging from adjectives and verbs to nouns, prominently manifest in Indonesian discourse, with the use of animal-based metaphors being a prevailing means of spontaneously conveying emotional responses (Heider, 2021). The employment of animal objects as swearing metaphors reflects their symbolic significance, grounded in widespread social perceptions regarding these creatures (Tambunsaribu, 2020). Notwithstanding, such linguistic choices might engender multifaceted negative connotations, potentially influencing unfavourable interpretations of the objects in question.

Within the purview of this research, the focus lies on football supporters in Indonesia, who frequently resort to employing a diverse array of objects for swearing (Firdaus & Trilia, 2020). In the context of football, which accentuates human physicality, the selection of animal objects as vehicles of emotive expression during match-watching is deemed apropos. This choice is informed by the broader social construction of these animals, as embedded in folkloric narratives and shared cultural understandings that have persisted through generations. Furthermore, religious aspects play a role in shaping perspectives toward certain animals, positioning them either as objects of veneration or aversion. Social perspectives, intertwined with cognitive patterns, behavioural norms, and intergenerational transmission, significantly contribute to the varying interpretations surrounding the objects (Lafreniere et al., 2022).

In Indonesia, dogs (they are commonly referred to as “Anjing”) hold a dual role as both a domesticated animal closely associated with human companionship and a symbol of impurity. This symbolic duality arises from the perception of dogs’ saliva, which is considered ritually impure (haram) within Islamic teachings. This context is particularly significant given that the majority of Indonesia’s population adheres to Islam, comprising approximately 87.51 percent of the population (Forth, 2019). Thus, because “Anjing” is perceived to embody negative traits, it can transform into a term used to express emotions related to an object or subject. This term can be employed both individually and collectively, as seen in groups or communities, such as football supporter groups.

As a sport highly cherished by the populace in

Indonesia, football surpasses badminton and boxing to stand out as a prominent athletic pursuit (Harjo, 2022). Nonetheless, its presence is somewhat decorative due to the limited number of accolades achieved. Despite this, the unwavering support from the Indonesian supporters as a community, manifested in fervent supporters, engenders the nation's identity as a football-centric entity within the regional realm of Asia (Fuller, 2015). Being a part of the supporters is endowed with significance, signifying affiliation with a larger community united in endorsing football clubs or teams aspiring to achieve remarkable distinction (Nakpanom, 2020).

The identity of a supporter is pervaded by emotional investment and the longing for continuous excellence from the favoured clubs or teams. This emotional involvement, in turn, engenders inner turmoil among supporters who perceive themselves as integral constituents of the teams they passionately advocate (Hollanda & Busset, 2023). Consequently, in Indonesia, when a football club represents a specific locality (e.g., Persija FC symbolizing Jakarta), a defeat in a match can lead the supporters, to experience a sense of disgrace and blandishment on behalf of their city (Fuller, 2015). This deep-rooted sense of belonging constitutes a crucial element in the cognitive and behavioural aspects of Indonesian supporter culture.

The enduring support extended by individuals and supporter groups toward their cherished clubs or teams becomes an intrinsic activity ingrained in their psyche, conduct, and daily lives, thus fostering the development of a distinctive supporter culture (Nakpanom, 2020). This emergent culture also gives rise to various rituals practiced by fans to assert their identities as dedicated supporters (Besnier et al., 2018). Examples of such rituals encompass the physical presence of supporters in stadiums during matches and their active involvement in fervent confrontations with fans of rival clubs. Remarkably, these rituals often involve manifestations of support that may not be visually evident, such as vocal expressions conveyed through chants and taunts (Firdaus & Trilia, 2020).

Swear words, as a linguistic phenomenon, encapsulate emotive and affective dimensions conveyed indirectly by the uttering subject. Their communicative content may encompass expressions of support, derision, affirmation, or even intimidation, thereby eliciting manifold significations and perceptions directed toward the targeted interlocutors (Stapleton et al., 2022). Within the milieu of football supporters, invective functions as a medium of communication, fostering connections between supporters and players, as well as antagonistic relations with rival supporters (Ahmad et al., 2023). Such

communicative acts are predicated upon articulating latent or heightened emotions and enduring experiences (Knapton et al., 2018). The performative process of invective enunciation is further facilitated through the strategic use of metaphors, a linguistic practice that resonates prominently within Indonesian culture, where animalistic figures, including “Anjing”, are frequently deployed (Forth, 2019).

The word “Anjing” which means “dogs” in English, as the principal target of invective in colloquial discourse across Indonesia is underpinned by an intricate interplay of social, cultural, and religious contextual forces. Socio-culturally, specific segments of Indonesian society construe dogs as emblematic of thievery (Forth, 2019). From a religious vantage point, adherents of Islam, constituting most of the Indonesian populace, ascribe ritual impurity to dogs, rendering them objects of avoidance (Kharputly, 2020).

The amalgamation of these socio-cultural and religious perspectives engenders a distinct set of assumptions and perceptions, characterizing dogs as inferior and repulsive creatures, thereby precluding their legitimate ontological parity with other animals, especially humans. As a discursive strategy, the promulgation of such perceptions seeks to effectuate the dehumanization of interlocutors or targeted subjects (Firdaus & Trilia, 2020), through the instrumentality of invective employing the swear word “Anjing”. By deploying such linguistic weaponry, swear words producers endeavour to inscribe perceptions of their recipients as thieves and repugnant entities (Stephens et al., 2022), irrevocably relegated to an inferior ontological status bereft of commensurability with the human.

Consequently, the use of “Anjing” as a metaphoric object of a swear words articulated by football supporters in Indonesia has coalesced into a deeply entrenched tradition (Ahmad et al., 2023), evincing distinctive contours vis-à-vis analogous expressions of invective adopted by supporter communities in other national settings (Firdaus & Trilia, 2020). The employability of “Anjing” as a lexical resource in this capacity diverges due to the non-universality of the socio-cultural and religious perspectives on dogs in other cultural contexts, where canines are extolled instead. Therefore, the act of invective enacted by football supporters using swear words (Stapleton et al., 2022), with “Anjing” as its principal lexical signifier can be construed as an instance of verbal dehumanization vis-à-vis fellow human subjects.

Considering the foregoing, the present inquiry endeavours to undertake a comprehensive analysis of

the semiotics and meaning of the swear word “Anjing” used by Indonesian football supporters as a metaphoric object, encompassing a multi-dimensional perspective that spans the social, cultural, and religious realms. By this comprehensive inquiry, the research outcomes are poised to evince that swear words deployed by football supporters may be aptly classified as a form of verbalized violence, fundamentally predicated upon the degradation of fellow human subjects, therein assuming the features of dehumanization.

Literature Review

Swearing serves as both a medium and a message, influencing people’s behaviour (Hostetter & Rasconpowell, 2022). It can shift individuals from calmness to emotional intensity. Swear words are often metaphorical and may convey various meanings and emotions, such as intimidation and dominance. This oral tradition plays a significant role in language and communication, allowing senders to convey messages effectively. In a broader context, conveying a message involves four interconnected steps (Loic, 2020). Firstly, the message is produced and made public. Then, it is organized for effective communication with the intended audience. This phase emphasizes specific language, including swearing expressions. After achieving communication goals, the message can be further modified using linguistic and cultural elements. The final step is delivering the message to the recipient, who interprets it positively or negatively based on how it was conveyed during communication.

In the process of conveying a message, several vital elements come into play to ensure effective communication and understanding between individuals. According to Dell Hymes (2004), these key components include the genre, which represents the type of activity or medium used for expressing the message. The topic remains central to the message, ensuring its relevance and coherence. The purpose of the message determines its intended direction, whether for the general public or specific individuals. Context setting involves considering factors like location, time, age, and duration to maintain the message’s relevance and appropriateness. The key component emphasizes the tone and tempo, conveying the emotions of the communicator. Participant characteristics, such as age, gender, ethnicity, social status, and relationship, are considered to target the message effectively.

The form, encompassing both verbal and non-verbal aspects, employs suitable language for the intended audience. The content constitutes the core information

of the message, conveyed with literal meaning to avoid ambiguity. The art of sequence ensures a well-organized message delivery, preventing overlaps and considering the quantity of information transmitted. Interaction involves observation and attention to details surrounding the subject or object to enhance the message's contextual relevance. Lastly, interpretation acknowledges that the recipient's understanding of the message is influenced by their knowledge and cultural background, ultimately shaping their perception of its meaning (Hymes, 2004).

Football supporters' behaviour, which includes expressing both support and insults towards their idols or opponents, reflects emotional impulses conveyed through swearing activities (Anshari et al., 2023). While swearing shares similarities with other related words in a language, the focus lies on asserting dominance and demeaning the target (Hostetter & Rascon-powell, 2022). This is linked to the concept of dehumanization, in which ideologies aim to degrade individuals. Swearing also manifests as verbal violence, demonstrated through language and spoken communication (Knapton et al., 2018). Emphasizing freedom of expression and emotional release through words can lead to interpretations that cause intimidation or marginalization of the target (Lafreniere et al., 2022). In football, supporters are often associated with instigating violence, leading to conflicts (Hollanda & Busset, 2023).

The ideology of dehumanization in football supporter behaviour and violent actions is rooted in three interconnected factors. Firstly, emotional release through aggressive actions, fuelled by misrepresentation and misinterpretation (Charles & Rah, 2019). Supporters engaging in violence or demeaning others mistakenly believe themselves to be part of the competing party, driven by a desire to outdo the opposing side. The second factor is related to expectations, where unexpected results can trigger emotions leading to aggressive behaviour. Lastly, the social aspect, motivating supporters to engage in violent actions to feel a sense of belonging to a group and be recognized for their existence, shaping their identity as supporters and being part of the community (Knapton et al., 2018).

Sports activities are closely intertwined with human actions, behaviour and habits, forming a distinct culture over time (Besnier et al., 2018). Human body movements, including both visible and unseen gestures originating from the sensory organs, such as the five senses, contribute to this cultural aspect. Verbal communication, accomplished through speech, particularly through the mouth, plays a key role in sports. It facilitates the exchange of messages among actors, such as athletes,

players, clubs, and supporters (Hollanda & Busset, 2023). Understanding these messages is essential as it determines the subsequent responses of the recipients. Misinterpretation of messages can lead to undesirable outcomes, which can give rise to discourses resulting in vandalism, violence, or even genocide (Charles & Rah, 2019).

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach, prioritizing an in-depth examination of the subject matter through the researcher's interpretive lens, thereby establishing the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection (Heider, 2021). The research primarily adopts the method of ethnography, supplemented by in-depth interviews and the retrieval of pertinent archives and documents to augment the data acquisition process. This methodological approach allows for geographical flexibility, as observations are not confined to a singular locale but are extended to various football stadiums within the regions of Java and Bali. The duration of the observation period spanned 18 months, commencing in January 2022, and culminating in June 2023. Throughout this period, the study encapsulated 21 football matches, encompassing three distinct tiers of competition involving the Indonesian national team.

To provide a clearer overview of the observational context, the football matches included in the fieldwork are summarized below. These matches represent the primary sites of ethnographic observation conducted throughout the research period. [Table 1](#) shows the list of football matches observed during the study.

The observation endeavours to comprehensively capture the multifaceted dynamics of supporter behaviour by adopting a meticulous observational process divided into distinct phases: pre-match, in-match, and post-match observations (Besnier et al., 2018). The pre-match phase is dedicated to capturing the diverse gamut of emotions and pivotal moments among football supporters as they converge upon the stadium, their collective anticipation fuelled by the tangible prospect of triumph. The subsequent in-match phase assumes the form of a discerning lens, keenly attuned to documenting the supporters' expressions of elation or disillusionment in response to their favoured team's performance. In parallel, the post-match phase signifies a critical juncture, characterized by the manifestation of supporter behaviour reflecting contentment or discontentment with the outcome of the match.

Table 1 List of observed football match

No	Date	Opponent	Venue	Agenda
1	01/ 27/ 2022	Timor Leste	Bali	FIFA Match Day
2	01/ 30/ 2022	Timor Leste	Bali	FIFA Match Day
3	06/ 01/ 2022	Bangladesh	Bandung	FIFA Match Day
4	09/ 14/ 2022	Timor Leste	Surabaya	Qualification Asia Cup U-19
5	09/ 16/ 2022	Hongkong	Surabaya	Qualification Asia Cup U-19
6	09/ 18/ 2022	Vietnam	Surabaya	Qualification Asia Cup U-19
7	09/ 24/ 2022	Curacao	Bandung	FIFA Match Day
8	09/ 27/ 2022	Curacao (2nd Leg)	Bogor	FIFA Match Day
9	12/ 23/ 2022	Kamboja	Jakarta	AFF Cup
10	12/ 29/ 2022	Thailand	Jakarta	AFF Cup
11	01/ 06/ 2023	Vietnam	Jakarta	AFF Cup
12	02/ 17/ 2023	Fiji	Jakarta	Friendly Match U-20
13	02/ 19/ 2023	New Zealand	Jakarta	Friendly Match U-20
14	02/ 21/ 2023	Guatemala	Jakarta	Friendly Match U-20
15	03/ 25/ 2023	Burundi	Bekasi	FIFA Match Day
16	03/ 28/ 2023	Burundi (2nd Leg)	Bekasi	FIFA Match Day
17	04/ 11/ 2023	Bhayangkara FC	Jakarta	Friendly Match
18	04/ 14/ 2023	Lebanon	Jakarta	FIFA Match Day
19	04/ 16/ 2023	Lebanon (2nd Leg)	Jakarta	FIFA Match Day
20	06/ 14/ 2023	Palestina	Surabaya	FIFA Match Day
21	06/ 19/ 2023	Argentina	Jakarta	FIFA Match Day

The analytical framework governing the investigation of the subject's behaviour is rooted in the "speaking" approach (Hymes, 2004). Through this comprehensive lens, the ethnocentric movements of the supporters in the act of swearing are deemed a nuanced communicative process, where intricate exchanges of messages with diverse interlocutors transpire within the stadium milieu during the unfolding of matches. To supplement the

primary data, the research adopted an in-depth interview technique, involving the selection of specific subjects who exemplified the quintessential football supporters passionately endorsing their teams by attending matches in person. The chosen informants, totalling five individuals aged between 21 and 40, were selected based on their active involvement in the context of match attendance, irrespective of gender, as the primary focus remains resolutely fixed on unravelling the intricate tapestry of supporter conduct during the live proceedings. Notably, the informants were astutely observed during the matches by the researcher, where instances of verbalized invectives utilizing the term "Anjing" as an emotive outlet were meticulously documented.

This study applies the framework of linguistic ethnography to investigate the semantic transformation of the term "Anjing" within the context of Indonesian football supporter culture. Initially denoting a literal animal, "Anjing" has evolved into a derogatory symbol, functioning as a tool for dehumanization aimed at rival supporter groups. This shift in meaning is not merely linguistic but is intricately linked to broader social dynamics, where the word becomes a marker of social distinction and an expression of rivalry.

The observation focused on understanding the use of the term "Anjing" in football supporter interactions by selecting high-stakes matches and strategically observing both in-stadium and outside interactions. Data collection involved non-interventionist methods such as direct observation, audio-video recordings, and contextual photographs, capturing the term's usage during emotional moments like conflicts, chants, or dramatic outcomes. Observations spanned various supporter groups and match intensities to identify patterns in frequency, emotional intensity, and targets of the term. Combined with post-observation interviews, this approach validated findings, revealing the term's evolving meaning and role as a tool of dehumanization within football supporter culture.

Additionally, the research explores the implications of these linguistic changes within the framework of social studies, emphasizing how language reflects, reinforces, and shapes social power relations and collective identities. By situating these findings within the broader context of cultural and social change, the study highlights the intersection of language, identity, and power, offering critical insights into how language can function as both a mirror and a tool of societal transformation.

Post-observation, the researcher assiduously approached the informants, seeking their informed consent to engage in interviews. The selection of

informants, originating from five distinct locales aligning with the match venues (namely, Jakarta, Bandung, Bekasi, Bogor, and Surabaya), was strategically executed to illuminate the variances in cultural understandings associated with the concept of “Anjing” as a swear word or an animal.

To provide an overview of the interview participants involved in this study, the following table summarizes the football supporters who took part in the interviews. The participants were selected from several locations corresponding to the match venues in order to capture variations in cultural interpretations of the term “Anjing.” Table 2 shows the list of interview participants included in this study.

The criteria for selecting informants to strengthen the primary observational data include individuals who are members of national football supporter groups, with valid membership cards. They must have attended at least 10 live matches, demonstrating an understanding of the stadium atmosphere and the role of supporters. Additionally, informants must reside in different regions, particularly in cities that have hosted national team matches. A key criterion is that they have used the word “Anjing” as an insult during matches, relevant to the study’s focus. Informant selection is not based on gender, age, religion, or education level. Snowball sampling was employed, with informants selected based on recommendations from previous participants. In the end, five informants were selected, meeting the criteria.

The interview process took place in different time sessions, in the period January to May 2023. In parallel to the primary data, the research harnesses supplementary materials in the form of academic literature, encompassing scholarly journals, as well as popular texts that chronicle media reports, and various cases that record the behaviour of football supporter.

Table 2 List of interviews with football supporters

Interviewee	Name	Age	Place of origin	Date of Interview
1	Ridwan	24 years old	Bandung	January 6th, 2023
2	Fandy	35 years old	Jakarta	February 19th, 2023
3	Agus	40 years old	Bekasi	March 12th, 2023s
4	Joni	31 years old	Surabaya	April 2th, 2023
5	Safira	21 years old	Bogor	May 27th, 2023

Results

The present study centres on Indonesia, where the phenomenon of swearing and cursing constitutes a subject of inquiry with diverse objects that metaphorically exemplify such expressions. These objects, ranging from adjectives and verbs to nouns, prominently manifest in Indonesian discourse, with the use of animal-based metaphors being a prevailing means of spontaneously conveying emotional responses (Heider, 2021). The employment of animal objects as swearing metaphors reflects their symbolic significance, grounded in widespread social perceptions regarding these creatures (Tambunsaribu, 2020). Notwithstanding, such linguistic choices might engender multifaceted negative connotations, potentially influencing unfavourable interpretations of the objects in question.

Within the purview of this research, the focus lies on football supporters in Indonesia, who frequently resort to employing a diverse array of objects for swearing (Firdaus & Trilia, 2020). In the context of football, which accentuates human physicality, the selection of animal objects as vehicles of emotive expression during match-watching is deemed apropos. This choice is informed by the broader social construction of these animals, as embedded in folkloric narratives and shared cultural understandings that have persisted through generations. Furthermore, religious aspects play a role in shaping perspectives toward certain animals, positioning them either as objects of veneration or aversion. Social perspectives, intertwined with cognitive patterns, behavioural norms, and intergenerational transmission, significantly contribute to the varying interpretations surrounding the objects (Lafreniere et al., 2022).

The particular use of Anjing’ as the swearing word and the focal point of this investigation is attributed to its frequent utterances by football supporters during matches. Its selection is perceived as aptly capturing the emotionally volatile nature of such enthusiasts, contingent upon the unfolding circumstances on the field. The spontaneous nature of swearing practices bolsters the notion that the term “Anjing” is well-suited to encapsulate diverse emotive moments during a match (Anshari et al., 2023). Importantly, this choice is discerned vis-à-vis alternative animal objects, such as ‘Babi’ (Pig) or ‘Monyet’ (Monkey), contingent on prevailing societal perceptions surrounding the selected fauna.

“... Swearing using ‘Babi’ is not as appealing, as not everyone has encountered or seen a pig. Most people associate pigs only with Christians. Consequently, when

someone uses ‘Babi’ as a swear word, individuals of other religious beliefs will not relate to it!” (Fandy, 2023).

“... ‘Monyet’ is rarely employed as a swear word during matches, as it is associated with mocking players with dark skin. It is often linked to racist actions. We do not condone racism; our intention is solely to express our emotions.” (Ridwan, 2023).

In accordance with the perspectives shared by the informants, it is evident that the choice of animal-based swear words is subject to nuanced considerations based on social and cultural perceptions. The two animals discussed, namely, ‘Babi’ (Pig) and ‘Monyet’ (Monkey), elicit distinctive reactions from the supporters in terms of their appropriateness for swearing purposes. The first informant points out that ‘Babi’ is not a preferred swearing object due to its limited universality. The animal’s association primarily with Christians creates a potential disconnect for individuals from other religious backgrounds when exposed to this term as a form of expletive. Such concerns highlight the significance of shared cultural understandings and religious connotations that underscore the reception of specific swear words.

Similarly, the second informant notes that ‘Monyet’ is seldom employed as a swearing word during football matches. This reluctance is attributed to its connotation with racial mockery, commonly associated with demeaning players with dark skin. The informants emphasize the collective disapproval of racist actions among the supporters, signifying their conscientiousness regarding the potentially harmful implications of animal-based metaphors.

These insights reflect the broader intricacies underlying the adoption and avoidance of animal-based swearing in football discourse. The choice of animal objects as vehicles for expressing emotions necessitates an awareness of their cultural symbolism, historical associations (Harjo, 2022), and implications for diverse audiences (Tambunsaribu, 2020). The avoidance of terms showcases the supporters’ cognizance of fostering a more inclusive and respectful atmosphere amidst the fervent emotions surrounding football events. This multifaceted examination of animal-based swear words within the football context contributes to the understanding of linguistic practices, cultural dynamics, and social sensitivities.

Based on rigorous observations, augmented by in-depth interviews with diverse subjects, the rationale behind the selection of “Anjing” as the object of swearing can be attributed to its frequent usage and linguistic evolution entrenched in the subjects’ vernacular from early developmental stages. Subsequently, a comparative

analysis was conducted, contrasting “Anjing” with other animal referents such as ‘Babi’ and ‘Monyet’, wherein the latter two were deemed less appropriate for profane usage in the football context.

The adoption of “Anjing” as a swearing object is considered to encompass a broad spectrum of emotional expressions, owing to its universal recognition and familiarity among all parties involved (Hostetter & Rascon-powell, 2022). The implications of such linguistic choices are intrinsically tied to social perspectives, which are further nuanced by religious and cultural facets. From a religious vantage point, the majority-Muslim composition of Indonesia shapes perceptions of dogs as impure creatures, rendering them forbidden to be touched. The doctrinal underpinning of this perspective is derived from authoritative Islamic texts, most notably the Quran and supplementary sources like Hadith (Kharputly, 2020).

Moreover, beyond religious considerations, the subjects’ social cognitions surrounding dogs as a profane object are informed by prevalent cultural portrayals. In Western societies, dogs are commonly regarded as loyal and cherished pets, whereas in Indonesia, they are more frequently associated with stray animals, precluding their suitability for human companionship (Forth, 2019). This discernment is reinforced by the observation that dog ownership predominantly occurs within more affluent socioeconomic strata (Halonen & Laihonon, 2021), whereas the football supporters resorting to “Anjing” as a profane term typically hail from lower to middle socioeconomic backgrounds. Consequently, this social perception construes dogs as unsuitable for domestication within lower socioeconomic communities.

The multifaceted rationale behind the selection of “Anjing” as a swearing object encompasses linguistic usage, religious beliefs, and social perceptions. This empirical inquiry sheds light on the intricate interplay of linguistic practices, cultural values, and religious influences. By delving deeper into the complexities of emotive expressions within diverse social settings, this academic investigation paves the way for further explorations into the broader implications of animal-based swearing in the realm of sports and sociolinguistics.

The prevailing negative perceptions concerning dogs, characterized by their existence without ownership and their feral nature, contribute significantly to their widespread depiction as unclean animals. These views are intricately intertwined with religious considerations (Islam), where dogs’ saliva is symbolically associated with impurity (Kharputly, 2020). Such perceptions underscore the justification for their prohibition and

subsequent avoidance of Islamic religious practices. Moreover, dogs scavenging behaviour, subsisting on refuse and occasionally pilfering food from various sources, further reinforces the perception of dogs as thieving animals, prompting their exclusion and repulsion from human habitation. These culturally constructed beliefs, transmitted through generations, foster the prevailing conception that dogs are inherently impure creatures, unfit for close association with human society.

“... fundamentally, the reason why I swear using “Anjing” is because, in my opinion, dogs are considered animals forbidden in Islam, and I am a follower of Islam. So, when I call someone ‘Anjing,’ it means that person should be avoided...” (Safira, 2023).

“... The reason is simple, in my region, stray dogs often steal food from people’s homes, making them perceived as mischievous creatures. So, when I use the word ‘Anjing,’ it implies that the person I refer to is dirty and should be cast away from society...” (Agus, 2023).

In the context of supporters who employ the swear word, the informant from Bogor revealed that the choice of “Anjing” is deeply rooted in religious convictions. For her, “Anjing” is considered a suitable expletive due to its association with the prohibition of dogs in Islam. Likewise, an informant from Bekasi explicated the simplicity behind using “Anjing” as a profanity, grounded in the prevalent societal portrayal of dogs as unclean creatures engaged in scavenging activities. Consequently, the use of “Anjing” serves to stigmatize the individual being referred to, likening them to stray dogs causing disruptions in human communities.

The interpretations provided by the football supporter subjects tend to converge upon the notion that dogs are animals associated with the concept of “haram” or religious prohibition, indicating the restriction of proximity to dogs due to inherent qualities. The contextual understanding of dogs as creatures to be avoided also gives rise to the belief that dogs do not possess an equal standing with humans (Tambunsaribu, 2020). This religious perspective engenders a hierarchical differentiation, placing humans above dogs in the societal stratum.

Moreover, the comprehensive cultural viewpoint, widely embraced within society, encompasses the portrayal of dogs as unclean and feral animals, rendering them unsuitable for domestication and on par association with humans. The social context further underscores the prevailing perception of dogs as primarily belonging to the middle to upper-middle economic strata (Halonen & Laihonon, 2021), thus diverging from the football supporters in Indonesia, who predominantly hail from



Figure 1 Supporters used “Anjing” as an object of swearing during football match

lower to middle socioeconomic backgrounds. [Figure 1](#) below illustrates a concrete example of this phenomenon within the stadium setting, depicting Indonesian national team supporters directly expressing their reactions during the match. In response to various moments on the field, supporters frequently swear or shout the word “Anjing” as a form of spontaneous verbal outburst directed at players, referees, or match situations

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The selection of dogs as profanity reveals a perception of these animals as inferior to humans. Consequently, dogs are deemed unworthy of coexistence with humans, which in turn perpetuates the notion that their existence should be eliminated from society. This framework closely aligns with the understanding of dehumanization (Charles & Rah, 2019), which originally posits the exclusion of certain individuals or groups from equal standing with others, thereby justifying their eradication (Kharputly, 2020). In this context, dogs, symbolizing entities deemed unworthy of existence, can serve as objects of dehumanization that may be directed towards other individuals or groups as targets of expression.

Discussion

This section of the discussion further explores the role of “Anjing” as an object of insult in both individual and collective behaviour and perspectives among football supporters in Indonesia. The focus shifts from the

background of selecting the word “Anjing,” as discussed in previous sections, to a deeper examination of its evolving meaning and role as a tool of dehumanization, which aligns with the study's main findings.

The collective perspectives of the football supporters exemplify the intricate interplay between religious, social, and cultural factors that shape their conceptualization of the relative position of dogs in relation to humans. These perspectives have potential ramifications for the treatment of animals and shed light on the manifestation of dehumanizing tendencies towards specific individuals or groups within society. Therefore, Figure 2 below illustrates the foundational background behind the selection of the word “Anjing” as a preferred object of swearing, explaining the meaning, objectives, and emotional reasoning that underlies its use as a dehumanizing expression within supporter discourse.

The present discourse delves into the semiotic significance of profane expressions, particularly the derogatory use of the swear word “Anjing” in the context of football supporters. The study seeks to elucidate how such profanities function as vehicles for the dehumanization of certain subjects, thereby perpetuating a hierarchical distinction between self and others within the football spectatorship realm. The swear word “Anjing” assumes a dual role in this context, serving both as a pejorative expression and as a mechanism of dehumanization. When employed by football supporters, it predominantly fulfils the primary purpose of demeaning and debasing individuals or groups they perceive as adversaries or disruptors within the context of the game. Not merely confined to mere insult, the application of this derogatory term is more insidious, as it denies the targeted subjects the fundamental equality as fellow human beings.

In the milieu of football stadiums, where emotions run high, football supporters utilize the profanity “Anjing” as an emotive outlet in response to various occurrences during the match (Anshari et al., 2023). To comprehend

the underlying motivations and implications of employing “Anjing” as a profane object of dehumanization, this study focuses on the targets of such profanities. These targets encompass various actors engaged in football matches, including players from the supported or opposing teams. Moreover, opposing supporters often serve as primary recipients of these derogatory utterances, given their role as fitting adversaries in the verbal exchanges among rival fanbases. Furthermore, the scope of such profanities may encompass referees, coaches from both teams, and other stakeholders, such as federation officials, organizing committees, and security personnel, whose transient physical presence on the field is contingent upon situational exigencies (Ahmad et al., 2023).

This study draws upon observational findings to elucidate a compelling aspect concerning the objectives behind profane invectives, particularly the dehumanizing demeaning use of profanity “Anjing” in the context of football fandom. Remarkably, the dehumanization objectives are observed to be predominantly directed towards opposing supporters, perceived to be comparable in status or standing. This differential treatment can be attributed to the shared identity of subjects as fellow supporters, both those employing the profanity and those subject to it, thereby justifying the targeted application of profanity “Anjing,” considering the substantial numbers of opposing supporters, often numbering in the hundreds to thousands, in contrast to other actors, whose presence may be limited to mere tens.

Upon closer examination, the usage of the “Anjing” profanity by football supporters, with a specific focus on dehumanizing or demeaning opposing subjects as animal and denying them human equivalence, appears to be selectively reserved for a singular target - namely, the opposing supporters. The employment of the “Anjing” profanity against other actors, such as players, referees, or coaches, seems to be predominantly driven by emotionally charged expressions stemming from sentiments of disappointment, satisfaction, or anger,



Figure 2 The background of Indonesian football supporters using “Anjing” as a swear word

often contingent upon situational occurrences, rather than being geared towards dehumanization.

The discernible emphasis on distinct objectives in deploying the “Anjing” profanity against target actors underscores the multifaceted nature characterizing its application by football supporters. This multifaceted context is rooted in the complexity of the meanings and intentions underlying the use of the “Anjing” profanity, leading to diverse perspectives regarding its choice of targets. Such intricacy is bolstered by several factors, including the prevailing notion that opposing supporters share a common identity as devoted fans, steadfastly dedicated to championing their respective teams' triumphs, while engaging in confrontations with perceived impediments. Furthermore, the quantity of opposing supporters, perceived as proportional to the target subject's capacity, may play a pivotal role in evoking uncontrollable reactions, thus necessitating a commensurate response from supporters.

The use of the “Anjing” profanity within the context of football supporters manifests a multifaceted landscape, wherein dehumanization primarily targets opposing supporters, while other actors are subjected to invectives driven by emotionally charged responses to situational events. A comprehensive comprehension of the underlying dynamics and factors influencing the selection of profane targets yields invaluable insights into the intricate dynamics of supporters' culture and the multifarious nature of profane language within the sporting milieu.

“...the use of “Anjing” directed at opposing supporters is a part of intimidation. We will continue to shout “Anjing” in the hope of making them feel inferior. However, our intention is solely directed towards them, as we consider it an 'apple to apple' comparison...” (Joni, 2023).

The selection of the target subjects, i.e., opposing supporters considered to be on par in status, engenders

varied reactions that trigger distinct situational and contextual outcomes. From a philosophical standpoint, the act of swearing serves dual purposes, encompassing both internal and external dimensions. When directed inwardly, toward oneself or the subject, swearing serves to vent emotions associated with sensory experiences, such as observable circumstances or auditory stimuli (Stephens et al., 2022). Conversely, external employment of swearing, directed at individuals or groups, aims to deliver a message of emphasis, solidifying the subject's positioning vis-à-vis other actors (Loic, 2020).

In this light, the use of the swear word “Anjing” against opposing supporters seeks to assert the superior standing of the swearing faction over the targeted subjects. Underlying this act is the notion that employing “Anjing” as a profanity reinforces the hierarchical positioning of the opposing supporters as subordinate to the swearing group. This conveyed message embodies an aura of intimidation, reflective of deeply ingrained group culture and fervent loyalty to the supported team (Nakpanom, 2020). Moreover, the derogatory employment of “Anjing” intends to depict the opposing supporters as unclean, and undeserving entities.

The intertwined attributes of intimidation and insult inherent in swearing align with the facet of demeaning, constituting a distinct dimension of dehumanization. The contextual demeaning, overtly expressed through the articulation of “Anjing” systematically devalues the opposing supporters by regarding them not as humans but rather as animals. Consequently, the rationale underlying the selection of opposing supporters as the profanity's target subjects, premised on their comparable positioning at the same hierarchical level, proves incongruous. To further clarify this dynamic, Figure 3 below illustrates the purposes behind the use of the word “Anjing” as a swear word among Indonesian football supporters. The figure demonstrates that the act of swearing and the selection of this particular term are not arbitrary; rather,

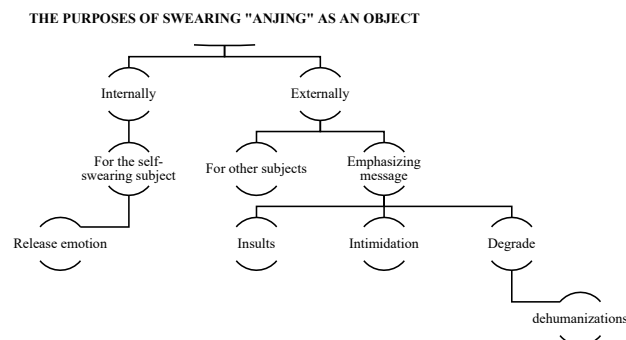


Figure 3 The purposes of using “Anjing” as a swear word by Indonesian football supporters.

they are shaped by both internal motivations and external motivations.

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The verbal manifestation of dehumanization by profane utterances, specifically targeting the object “Anjing” represents a form of behaviour aimed at denigrating and negating the existence of the subject. In this context, “Anjing” is perceived as a derogatory reference to animals, tainted with notions of debasement, impurity, and avoidance. The complex interplay of cultural beliefs is further complemented by religious influences, particularly within Islam, wherein the saliva of dogs is deemed impure and to be shunned. This cultural and religious backdrop shapes the perception of “Anjing” as an animal, with contrasting perspectives observed elsewhere, where dogs are often revered and kept as cherished pets.

The core of dehumanization is embodied in the viewpoint of football supporters from one of the competing teams, who employ “Anjing” as a profanity to vent their emotions in the heat of the moment. The intensified usage of “Anjing” as a derogatory expression encapsulates negative emotions such as disappointment and anger, directed explicitly towards the opposing supporters. From the perspective of the swearing supporters, the recipients of the profanity are transformed from human beings to mere animal beings, specifically dogs. This transformation embodies a clear intention to demean, solidifying a hierarchical positioning whereby the swearing faction asserts its dominance over the targeted subjects.

Conclusion and Recommendations

A central focus and novel aspect within various studies pertaining to supporter behavior lie in the utilization of swear words as derogatory language to debase rival supporter cohorts. Such language serves as an emotional conduit and concurrently functions as a tool for intimidation, notably discernible through the selection of the objects of swear words. This research

spotlights a compelling case study, notably in Indonesia, in the context of football supporter's culture, wherein the phenomenon of selecting animals, particularly dogs, as objects of derision becomes conspicuous. Dogs, conventionally associated with commendable attributes and classified as friendly animal in diverse cultural contexts, undergo a transformation into symbols for the denigration of others.

In accordance with empirical observations, the word “Anjing” demonstrates a multifaceted nature, signifying its capacity to convey varied connotations contingent upon the intended target. When employed as a means of emotional catharsis, whether directed towards individual actors such as referees and players affiliated with the supported team, it does not inherently encompass dehumanizing attributes. Consequently, the utilization of the term “Anjing” with the explicit intent to derogate and dehumanize another party is principally reserved for instances where it is specifically aimed at opposing supporters.

This phenomenon finds its roots in the social milieu, where dogs are linked with thievery and a feral existence on the streets. Furthermore, religious underpinnings contribute to the creation of distinct associations. In the context of Indonesia, where Islam constitutes the predominant faith, dogs are portrayed as negative entities due to their impure and unclean salivary characteristics, rendering them religiously proscribed. The deliberate selection of dogs as the focal point for swear words, voiced against rival supporters, underscores a pervasive practice of dehumanization. This practice seeks to demean and dispossess opposing supporter factions of their human identity. It manifests as an ingrained belief that rival supporters are akin to unclean animals, necessitating avoidance and rendering them unfit for the society.

The manifestation of dehumanization depicted through the expletive “Anjing” is often accompanied by a series of accompanying gestures, including the display of the middle finger, the rendition of chants and songs intended to mock and intimidate the opposition. Additionally, dehumanization is reinforced through the deployment of various instruments such as posters, banners, and flags, all of which symbolically depict opposing supporters as unworthy of being recognized as fellow humans within the football context. The objective of these actions is to instill fear and discomfort among opposing supporters, ultimately compelling them to vacate the stadium premises. Ultimately, this phenomenon disrupts their capacity to offer support, consequently rendering the home team supporters the

focal point of attention.

The consequences of this dehumanization through swearing and the series reaction that follow, underline the profound impact it exerts on the dynamics of supporter's culture. The progression from verbal insults to physical violence underscores the imperative of addressing and mitigating the dehumanizing within supporter culture to foster a more harmonious and inclusive football environment. Policymakers, governing bodies, and society need to work collaboratively to cultivate an atmosphere that values respect, empathy, and understanding, promoting a sense of unity and shared sportsmanship among football enthusiasts.

The study's sample size presents several limitations, including a small number of informants, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings and not fully represent the diversity of experiences among Indonesian football supporters. If most informants come from specific regions or groups, the findings may not reflect the broader social and cultural contexts of supporters nationwide. The study may face response bias, with informants offering socially acceptable answers instead of genuine reflections, and its focus on the term "Anjing" might overlook broader patterns of verbal dehumanization or other insults, while the limited data collection period risks missing changes in language use and social context over time.

Despite these limitations, the findings have important implications for social policy, particularly in education and sports culture. Educational programs should raise awareness about the role of derogatory language in reinforcing stereotypes and dehumanization, promoting more inclusive and empathetic communication. In sports, the findings suggest the need for anti-hate speech policies by football clubs and stadium authorities, including stricter regulations and educational initiatives to address the social impacts of abusive behaviour. Further research could explore cross-cultural comparisons of insults as tools of dehumanization and investigate the connection between derogatory language and aggression in large crowds, enhancing the understanding of collective behaviour and informing strategies to reduce conflict and promote inclusivity in both sports and broader society.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares there is no conflict of interest.

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