

## **Phenomenology of Communication Behavior of Football Supporters in Giving Support in Brebes Regency, Central Java, Indonesia**

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### **Abstract**

This research aims to study the phenomenology of communication behavior of football supporters in giving support in Brebes Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. This research was also conducted using qualitative approach with phenomenology and ethnography design with critical ethnography type research. The sources of data were collected by research informants using Purposive Sampling and Snowball technique. Data collection technique was conducted by observation, interview, and documental study, data analysis was conducted inductively using interactive cycle by Miles and Huberman. The results show that the phenomenology of communication behavior of football supporters was influenced by identity, attributes, and action, as the forms of delivering messages with language and certain symbols. The messages proposed to football team which they supported and parties of their favourite football team. A verbal and non-verbal support for their favourite team that was given when it had a match in or outside the field was their way to communicate. Their messages were expected to be delivered and received by the team or other parties, so that there was a feedback for the messages.

**Keywords:** Phenomenology, Behavior, Communication, Football Supporters

## Introduction

Football is one of sports which are favorable and popular for people in the world, the football enthusiasts come from various groups without any different in caste, age, and even sex (Giulianotti, 2005; Utomo and Waristo, 2012). Football as one of the popular sports in the world, presents entertaining match and causes euphoria for the spectators or supporters, especially fanatical supporters (Hadi, 2017).

Great amount of spectators in a football match is a common thing, because the sport is so popular. There are two classifications of spectator according to Suroso, *et al.*, (2012), the first one is those who just see the match and those as supporters who see and support their favourite team. Spectators only enjoy the match, but supporters support and often joined in a group. The presence of football supporters gives positive and negative impacts.

According to Social Issues Research Center (2008), the positive impacts of supporters can be seen through the proximity of the members in various group activities, such as group meeting and togetherness in making banners and jargons to support their favourite team. It can maintain a sense of belonging between members that refers to group cohesiveness, which is defined as the power that makes the members of the group stay and obey group's agreements (Gibson, *et al.*, 2000). The negative impact is excessive attitude of supporters in supporting their team can cause clash between supporter groups. Wulansari, *et al.*, (2013) reveals that in an evaluation of 136 football matches, there were 2.6% or three to four riots. It shows that the goals of supporter groups were not achieved maximally, that was supporting the team with high sportsmanship in accordance with fair play program issued by FIFA. The riots started from shouting and mocking frontally to be emotionally triggered and eventually the individuals took anarchic actions (Sitepu and Setyaningsih, 2011).

The supporters have their own way to interact and communicate, on average they use attributes to communicate with team and other people as the proof of their fanaticism to their favourite team, this kind of communication behavior can be seen from various situations and conditions (Safitri and Andriyanto, 2015). According to Everett M. Rogers, communication is a process in which an idea is delivered from a source to one or more receiver, to change their behaviors (Cangara, 2012:75).

The presence of supporters is an important thing in a football match because without any supporter the match will be less interesting, flat, and meaningless. Supporters also play an important role in promoting a team's success, either to get a club's earnings from ticket sales or motivation for the team (Ridyawanti, 2008; Frandiantika, 2014; Safirti and Andrianto, 2015). Support from the supporters also influences the increasing of investment from sponsors to the team, as the fanaticism of supporters by using certain brand can attract people who see it (Kennedy and Kennedy, 2012; Abosag, *et al.*, 2012). Supporters have high tendency to enter a group communication, they implement it by joining a football supporter community to support their favourite team (Frandiantika, 2014).

Indonesian football supporters can be said as very fanatical supporters. According to Astomo, (2012), Indonesian supporter is one of the most fanatical supporters in the world, it holds the third position after English and Argentinean supporter. Psychologically, a fanatic usually cannot comprehend what is outside himself and other people or group's problems. The clear signs of fanaticism are the incapability in comprehending individual or other people's characteristics outside of his own group, even if it is right or wrong (Rizkita, 2012).

Indonesia as one of the countries that causes euphoria of football has supporter groups spread all over cities and regencies, including Brebes Regency, Central Java. In Brebes Regency

there is also a competing football team named PERSAB (*Persatuan Sepak Bola Brebes*). PERSAB as an amateur football club has a competition zone from Division III with players under 21 years old, Division II with players under 23 years old and Division I with free age. Since it was separated from branch manager of PSSI, at its first debut, PERSAB succeeded to be in top 10 of Division III Central Java Zone in 2012, and with the success PERSAB was promoted to be in Division II in 2013 (Hidayat, 2016: 132).

In 2014, there was a change in national competition format, Division I, II, and III were combined into a league named Nusantara league, as a preparation step to face the new competition season, PERSAB did some trials. In the first Nusantara league in Central Java zone, PERSAB against PERSEKAS Semarang Regency in Karang Birahi Brebes Stadium on 15<sup>th</sup> of August 2014. PERSAB was confident to play in its own home with a thousand spectators and the chant shouted by its supporters, it won the match with 2-1 (Hidayat, 2016: 139).

More achievements were achieved by PERSAB, started by being in top 10 of Division III Central Java Zone in 2012. Then in 2013, PERSAB was promoted to Division II. In the same year, PERSAB was in top 8 of Provincial Sports Week (Porprov). As semifinalist of Nusatanraa League in 2014 and the most spectacular achievement was shown by PERSAB junior by winning Indonesia Soccer Championship (ISC) or Soeratin League U-17 Central Java Zone in 2016 (Hidayat, 2016: 136).

Some achievements that have been achieved by PERSAB team are not separated from supports of many parties including supporters. PERSAB has supporter group called Saber Mania. Saber Mania was formed at the end of 2009 with the first coordinator named Sutono Kidam. The idea of Saber Mania establishment was from their concern to the development of football in Brebes Regency which at the moment was left behind compared to other regions, and they wanted to raise football in Brebes and start to compete with other regions (Hidayat, 2016: 112).

The presence of Saber Mania becomes an appropriate hospitality facility for football lovers and supporters in Brebes Regency. It is very meaningful for PERSAB players when they are playing in home or away. Support is very needed at match. Saber Mania's support influences players' mentality, whether they are pressed or not. Saber Mania was formed by football lovers and they voluntarily formed it without any force and pressure from any parties, and they established special community of football supporters which are always ready to support their favourite team, PERSAB Brebes.

According to Hidayat (2016: 114), the presence or existence of Saber Mania supporters is not seen enough, compared to Jakmania (PERSIJA), Bobotoh, (PERSIB), Bonek (PERSEBAYA), Aremania (AREMA MALANG), PANSER BIRU (PSIS SEMARANG), Pasoepati (PERSIS SOLO), and etc. Unfortunately, despite the struggle of PERSAB team to get better achievement, the support is still not maximal to encourage Saber Mania to be always there. From five thousand registered Saber Mania supporters, those who are actively support and come when PERSAB is having a match in its home are only half of the amount, and quarter of them come when it has away match (Hidayat, 2016:116).

The initial observation results conducted to Saber Mania supporters in supporting PERSAB athletes through their active role to get information is that there was no fanaticism of supporter members in giving support and uniformity or unity which showed the identity of Saber Mania supporter members. Here are the results of initial observation of Saber Mania

supporters' activities in supporting PERSAB team in a match, it can be seen on table 1 as follows:

**Table 1.** Profile of Saber Mania Supporters' Activities in Supporting PERSAB Team in a Match

No	Supporting Activities	Fanaticism		Note
		Exist	Does Not Exist	
1	Giving supportive chant or supporting song to athletes	√		Chant or supporting song given to athletes was various, using Javanese and Brebes language ( <i>ngapak/medok</i> )
2	Solidarity in giving chant or supporting song		√	Chant or supporting song was not sung together, the voices were not loud enough, not spirited enough, not all supporters sang and memorized the lyrics. Chant or supporting song was rarely sung.
3	Uniformity of costume worn to support the athletes		√	Costume worn by supporters was not the same, most of them still wore casual shirts and t-shirts with some texts made of pilox.
4	Attributes brought to support the athletes (flags, musical instruments, etc.)		√	Attributes brought by them were still few, and those who brought them were only the supporters, the flags were Indonesian flag, and white flag written by supporting texts for the athletes.
5	The crowd of supporters in supporting the athletes		√	Supporters who came to the stadium were not many, there was no excitement.

Source: Initial Observation Results, 2018

Initial observation to Saber Mania supporters in supporting PERSAB athletes shows that there was no fanaticism, it means that the support given to them was not maximal for the athletes of PERSAB, and it can be concluded that Saber Mania supporters did not show their social identity to public. As we know that social identity of supporters in supporting the athletes in a football match was very important to show the presence or existence as a belief of athletes to be motivated.

The presence or existence of football supporters in supporting the team is very important, because supporters can contribute in team victory, such as supervising the match led by a referee, distracting the opponent in a match, and motivating the team (Wolfson, *et al.*, 2005). The existence of football supporters also affects social identity when they visit opponent's home, if social identity is not enough felt then it will affect the fanaticism or make supporters' mental down in supporting the team (Fillis and Mackay, 2014).

According to Giulianotti (2002), social identity of football supporters needs to be shown to public, in order to make everybody know the goals and activities done by the supporter group, social identity of football supporters can be seen from ethics and behavior in the form of

fanaticism in supporting the team in a match, proud chant, uniform worn in a match, social activities, religious activities, and other positive activities done by the supporter group. The tendency of football supporters is expected to show their social identity, that is, to make something different and unique which can attract attention and be exposed by public such as printed media, electronic media and so on (Stoot, *et al.*, 2012).

From the data and phenomena above, the problems are how is the phenomenology of communication behavior of football supporters in giving support in Brebes Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. This research aims to study the phenomenology of communication behavior of football supporters in giving support in Brebes Regency, Central Java, Indonesia.

## Material and Method

This research was conducted using qualitative approach with phenomenology and ethnography design with critical ethnography type research (Creswell, 2012: 475). This research was conducted in several places including PSSI secretariat of Brebes Regency or PERSAB and Saber Mania secretariat, and KONI Office of Brebes Regency and Youth, Sports and Tourism (Dinpora) Office of Brebes Regency.

The sources of data in this research consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected from interview with Saber Mania supporter group, Football Coach, Football Athletes, and Football Managers, while secondary data was collected from data collection in the form of documentation analysis study data. The sources of data were collected from research informants using Purposive Sampling and Snowball technique.

The instruments used in this research were: 1) Interview guidelines on interview data collection technique, 2) Observation guidelines on observation data collection technique, and 3) Check list blank on documentation study data collection, supporting media used tape recorder, camel, and note book. To collect primary data in this research, there were three data collection techniques: 1) Direct observation, 2) Semi-structured interview, and 3) Documentation study or searching from existing archives as supporting data or secondary data.

Data validation in this research was used by using triangulation technique, by reviewing various data as a whole. Triangulation techniques used in this research were technical and source triangulation.

Data analysis used interactive analysis model developed by Miles and Huberman (1984) in Sugiyono (2015: 334). Processing and analyzing consisted of 4 interacted components: 1) Data Collection, 2) Data Reduction, 3) Data Display, and 4) Conclusion/Verifying. Data analysis was carried out during data collection. Data reduction was carried out by summarizing data into some parts with the determined categories. This division used coding. Data display was used by making short description, table, or diagram. Table and diagram were based on the determined categories.

## Result

During research setting from July to December 2018, a research was conducted on the phenomenology of communication behavior of football supporters in giving support to PERSAB Brebes. During observation, the result shows that the phenomenology of communication behavior of supporters was influenced by identity, attributes, and action, as a

message by using certain languages and symbols. The message was aimed to their football team and parties related to their favourite football team.

Communication behavior of supporters which showed over-fanaticism got various responses from the society. Even though, not all of the behaviors led to negative actions. As a matter of fact, communication behavior of fanatical PERSAB Brebes supporters mostly led to positive actions. However, that was the way of supporters in giving support for their favourite football team.

Research informants of this research were supporters from several supporter groups or supporters who did not have a group, or usually known as individual supporters. These informants had become fanatical supporters since they were little. Their identity as a football lover had been used since they were kids. Their love for football made them join PERSAB Brebes supporters fanatically.

Verbal and non-verbal supports for their favourite football team when the team had a match in and outside of the field was their way to communicate. The message which they wanted to deliver by using identity, attributes, and actions were expected to be delivered and received by the team or related parties, so that there was a feedback for the message. Verbal communication behavior of fanatical PERSAB supporters involved identity, attributes and actions, and there was a meaning of the message.

Fanatical PERSAB Brebes supporters admitted that verbal communication they did was a to support for their favourite team and intimidate the opponent and match set if the team led unfair match. They interpreted the words “*ORA OLIH ORA*” (there is no word for saying no) as a support so that the team continued to be enthusiastic, never give up, and did not embarrass. Verbal communication was shown by using banners with supporting words, critics, or critical statements from the media.

Non-verbal communication of fanatical PERSAB Brebes supporters involved identity, attributes, and actions, and there was a message which wanted to be delivered. Non-verbal communication behavior such as attraction or choreography was interpreted by the fanatical PERSAB Brebes supporters as solidarity in giving support and spirit for the team. That kind of non-verbal communication was also interpreted by them as a pride because their creativity in doing choreography, attracting or playing music was able to support the team. By using blue attributes, the supporters interpreted it as a mandatory color because it was the feature of PERSAB Brebes, their favourite club. For fanatical PERSAB Brebes supporters, blue was also interpreted as a symbol of confidence and persistent.

## Discussion

This research aims to review and categorize verbal and non-verbal communication behavior of fanatical PERSAB Brebes supporters. It was found from the results that the phenomenology of communication behavior of PERSAB Brebes supporters was influenced by three aspects: identity, attributes, and action. According to Jock Stein (in Nugroho, 2013), ‘Football is Nothing without Fans’. Football will be meaningless without the existence of fans. Fanaticism of a fan is able to contribute in positive and negative behavior. Sometimes fanaticism makes a person hate different parties so that the sportsmanship is fading away (Gheeto, 2013).

Communication behavior of a fan is related to self-concept. According to William James, self-concept is a view and feeling about self. Perception about self can be psychological,

social, and physical (Rakhmat, 2012). So, self-concept is one's view and feeling of about himself, where the perception is psychological, social, and physical and able to influence him in interaction to others. One's self-concept can be stated through his own attitude as his actualization.

Phenomenological study has tried the definition of experience in life. The purpose of phenomenological study is to seek or find the meaning of essential or basic things from the life experience. Phenomenology is a study to describe the meaning of some individual's experiments about a certain concept. Phenomenology is not only for individual, but can also perceived by groups (Herdiansyah, 2010).

Based on the results of the research, verbal and non-verbal communication behavior of fanatical PERSAB Brebes supporters can be categorized by identity, attributes, and actions, and using: 1) spoken and written language (verbal), 2) attraction and choreography (non-verbal), 3) the use certain symbols such as color and music.

Communication behavior is all activities that aim to find and get information from various sources to spread information to people in need (Suranto, 2011). Verbal and non-verbal communication behavior shown by fanatical PERSAB Brebes supporters is a part of their identity and has a potential message which is desired to be publicly delivered to aimed parties (Hogg, 2002). Identity is divided into two types: personal identity and social identity, both of will form self-image (Sedyaningih, 2010).

The meaning of verbal and non-verbal communication behavior of fanatical PERSAB Brebes supporters can also be categorized by identity, attributes, and actions, as seen by: a) Fanatical PERSAB Brebes supporters interpreted verbal communication behavior that they did to support the team and intimidate the opponent and as a match set if the team led an unfair match, interpreted the words "*ORA OLIH ORA*" (there is no word for saying no) as a support so that the team continued to be enthusiastic, never give up, and did not embarrass. Verbal communication was shown by using banners with supporting words, critics, or critical statements from the media. b) Fanatical PERSAB Brebes supporters interpreted non-verbal communication behavior such as attraction or choreography as solidarity in giving support and spirit for the team, that kind of non-verbal communication was also interpreted by them as a pride because their creativity in doing choreography, attracting or playing music was able to support the team, and by using blue meant that blue was a mandatory color because it was the feature of PERSAB Brebes, their favourite club. For fanatical PERSAB Brebes supporters, blue was also interpreted as a symbol of confidence and persistent.

When a fanatical PERSAB Brebes supporter thinks and acts as a supporter, it is the results of interaction. The meaning of identity, attributes, and actions from fanatical PERSAB Brebes supporters is merely to give support and spirit because of their big and deep love for their favourite team, and also their unlimited loyalty as the supporters who will do anything for PERSAB Brebes. *Sesrawungan* (well-communicated) culture also influences the meaning of identity of fanatical PERSAB Brebes supporters. The strong fanaticism and loyalty of a supporter is very important and not wrong if it is shown to public. However, what should be noticed is how to deliver or dispense fanaticism and loyalty not in destructive way.

With the awareness that supporters should be more mature, value sportsmanship and solidarity. Communication behavior of fanatical PERSAB Brebes supporters that was shown well and not harmful for public to their favourite team should be appreciated by all parties especially the players, officials, and club managers. The fanatical supporters should be

considered as partners by the team in which between the supporters and team should always have communication to support and appreciate each other.

The relationship with the community is interaction and 'connection' process between sport organization (sport club) and the assets on one side and another to the community or service and target along with the community. In football, the community is fanatical supporters. Non-verbal communication behavior according to Larry A. Samovar and Richard E. Porter covers all stimulation (except verbal stimulation) in a communication setting, resulting from individuals, that has a potential message value for the sender or receiver (Mulyana, 2007).

## Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion of the results explained above, it can be concluded that verbal and non-verbal communication behavior shown by fanatical PERSAB Brebes supporters cannot be separated from their personal identity and social identity in the society. Communication behavior shown by fanatical PERSAB Brebes supporters is merely because of their love and loyalty. *Sesrawungan* (well-communicated) culture as a culture of Brebes Regency which attaches in fanatical PERSAB Brebes supporters, never give up before struggling because PERSAB Brebes is a self-concept. It affects actions and interactions of fanatical PERSAB Brebes supporters as their identity.

Suggestions from this research are that there should be open synergy and communication between fanatical supporters, team, and club management of PERSAB Brebes, cooperating in club activities, and the club should be able to educate their fanatical supporters to not commit adverse action to public, their favourite team, and the supporters. The club should also campaign so the supporters will come to the stadium, during in the stadium, and when they go back to home after watching football match. Because the professional club is absolutely supported by fanatical supporters who are also ready to be professional as well.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors have not declared any conflicts of interest.

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