

Identity, Nationalism, and the Impact on National Resilience: A Case Analysis of the Role of Football Supporters in Indonesia



Uden Kusuma Wijaya¹, Gumilar Rusliwa Somantri², Muhammad Syaroni Rofii³, Muhammad Saiful Arifin⁴

^{1,2,3} School of Strategic and Global Studies, Universitas Indonesia

⁴ Faculty of Cultural Science, Universitas Indonesia

ABSTRACT: This study analyzes the identity and nationalism formed within the phenomenon of football supporters in Indonesia and its impact on national resilience. By conducting an in-depth case study of the behaviors, values, and social influences of football supporters, this research aims to understand how their engagement shapes national identity and contributes to Indonesian national resilience. The research methodology involves surveys, interviews, and content analysis of both online and offline interactions among supporters. The results provide insights into the complex dynamics among football supporters and their implications for the formation and strengthening of national resilience in Indonesia. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to a better understanding of how the involvement of football supporters can be positively integrated into efforts to maintain stability and national unity.

KEYWORDS: Football Supporters, National Resilience, Nationalism

INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic landscape of contemporary societies, the interplay between identity, nationalism, and their collective impact on national resilience has become a subject of profound significance. This paper embarks on an exploratory journey delving into these intricate connections with a specific focus on the role played by football supporters in Indonesia. The unique context of football fandom provides a lens through which the formation of identity and the expression of nationalism can be observed, offering insights into their broader implications for the nation's resilience.

Indonesia, a diverse archipelago with a rich tapestry of cultures and ethnicities, experiences a fervent passion for football. The phenomenon of football support transcends the confines of sports, intertwining with socio-cultural and political dimensions. As football supporters engage in collective expressions of identity and nationalism, it becomes imperative to unravel the dynamics that underlie their involvement and its consequential impact on the nation's resilience.

The choice to focus on football supporters stems from recognizing their significant role as cultural agents shaping perceptions of identity and fostering a sense of national belonging. Understanding the intricate relationships among identity, nationalism, and national resilience within the realm of football support is crucial for comprehending the broader socio-political landscape in Indonesia.

This research seeks to achieve several key objectives:

- To analyze the formation of identity and expressions of nationalism among football supporters in Indonesia.
- To investigate the impact of football supporters' engagement on the national resilience of Indonesia.
- To provide a comprehensive case analysis of the role played by football supporters in shaping national identity and contributing to national resilience.

The study employs a qualitative approach, incorporating in-depth case studies to comprehensively examine the behaviors, values, and social influences inherent within the community of football supporters. Furthermore, content analysis of both online and offline interactions will be conducted to unravel the nuanced dynamics shaping identity and nationalism.

Indonesian Football Supporter

Indonesia has various football supporter groups, including ultras, who are known for their enthusiastic and vocal support during matches. These groups often play a significant role in creating a vibrant stadium atmosphere. Indonesian football supporters passionately follow their local football clubs, participating in the excitement of domestic leagues such as Liga 1. Popular clubs like Persija Jakarta, Arema FC, and Persib Bandung have massive fan bases, each with its unique traditions and chants.

Identity, Nationalism, and the Impact on National Resilience: A Case Analysis of the Role of Football Supporters in Indonesia

1. The Jackmania

Based on skor.id, The Jakmania was born 23 years ago, precisely on December 19, 1997. At that time, they had the official name "The Jakarta Mania" (Jakmania). This name was initiated by Diza Rasyid Ali, the manager of Persija at that time. In the early days of its establishment, Jakmania had 40 founding members. The precursor of Jakmania is commonly referred to as JM40.

Gugun Gondrong was the first Chairman of The Jakmania. In addition to Gugun and Diky, Jakmania has also been led by Tauhid Indrasjarief or Bung Ferry. One of the notable leaders of Jakmania, trusted to lead for four terms, from 1999-2001, 2001-2003, and 2003-2005, as well as during the period 2017-2020. Other Chairmen of Jakmania include Danang Ismartani (2005-2007 and 2008-2010), M Larico Ranggamone (2012-2014), and Richard Ahmad Supriyanto (2015-2017). According to Diky Soemarno, currently, Jakmania has a total of 74,469 members, distributed across 83 regional branches (korwil) and 7 official bureaus located outside Jakarta.

2. Aremania

John Psilopatis (2002) said Persatuan Suporerter (PS) Arema was founded on August 11, 1987, by H. Acub Zaenal and Ir. Lucky Zaenal. Initially, Arema was a private club. At the time of its establishment, the Indonesian League was divided into two: a league for semi-professional clubs called Galatama and a league for clubs in the Perserikatan. Perserikatan clubs depended on regional governments for funding, while Galatama clubs relied on private sponsors.

Although Arema did not win any championships during the Perserikatan era, they became the Galatama champions in 1993. In 1994, semi-professional clubs were merged with Perserikatan clubs to form Liga Indonesia (Ligina). In 1988, the Arema Fans Club (AFC) foundation was established, with Ir. Lucky Zaenal served as its first chairman.

In the mid-1990s, youth gangs in Malang began to fade away. Meanwhile, the term "Aremania" emerged as the name for Arema supporters. These two phenomena marked a total change in the youth culture of Malang, catalyzed by several influential figures. In an article titled 'Aremania Carving a New History' published in Bestari, No. 156, 2001, Gus Nul, a former coach of Arema, mentioned that although it is unclear where the term "Aremania" originated, the name united Arema supporters.

Psychologically, the basic similarity between Arema and Aremania made supporters feel united. The word "Aremania" can be divided into "Arema" and "Mania." Aremania spontaneously emerged from Malang supporters who grew tired of the gang fights. There are several reasons for this change. Firstly, the gangs began to fade due to generational issues. Gang members, although still young in the late 1980s, had matured by the mid-1990s. As they became relatively older, they started to get bored with gang activities.

Nugraha (2018) said The current number of regional branches (Korwil) has reached over 300. One of the responsibilities of these regional branches is to conduct a census of Aremania members in their respective areas. This data serves as an archive for the Police, Foundations, and the regional branches themselves to facilitate coordination. For instance, if Aremania members embark on an away tour or attend matches outside Malang, and an incident such as an accident or supporter clash occurs, this data is crucial for identifying the presence of Aremania members.

3. BONEK

Basofi Soedirman (1997) Said, Bonek, an acronym in Javanese for Bondho Nekat (bold and daring), is commonly used to refer to a group of supporters of the Persebaya Surabaya football team. This group is synonymous with green-colored attributes, ranging from green shirts to green hats. The term "Bonek" was first introduced by the Jawa Pos morning newspaper in 1989.

Andi Irawan (2011), From a semantic perspective, the term 'bonek' carries a neutral meaning and does not have negative behavioral tendencies. Individuals with the characteristic of 'bondho nekat' demonstrate high motivation and courage to achieve a goal even without sufficient resources. The term 'bonek' has evolved to represent a trait exhibited by supporters who wish to watch and support a football team.

The mentor of YSS, Wastomi Suheri, states that Bonek consists of two groups: coordinated Bonek and uncoordinated Bonek, commonly known as wild Bonek. According to him, the current number of Bonek is around 60,000 individuals and the official members of YSS amount to approximately 5,000. Consequently, it becomes increasingly challenging to mentor and manage the supporters.

Football Supporters, Nationalism and National Resilience

The role of football supporters in contributing to national resilience is a multifaceted and intriguing aspect of contemporary society. Football, being one of the most popular and globally embraced sports, holds the power to transcend cultural, social, and political boundaries. The fervent support displayed by football enthusiasts, often organized into passionate supporter groups, can have significant implications for the overall resilience and unity of a nation.

Khoso, S. (2021) said Similar to the distinctive sense of nationalism found in every country worldwide, each nation also possesses a unique connection with sports. Notable instances include basketball in the USA, ping-pong (table tennis) in China, football in the United Kingdom and Brazil, ice hockey in Canada, or cricket in Pakistan, Australia, and India. While the residents of these nations

Identity, Nationalism, and the Impact on National Resilience: A Case Analysis of the Role of Football Supporters in Indonesia

may not always discover their sense of belonging through extensive studies of nationalism and its origins, they frequently do so by engaging in something as universal as supporting the sports in which their countries have excelled. Billig's concept of "everyday nationalism" becomes apparent on the playing field and in the stadiums, manifested in flags and on television screens, and expressed in the elation following the victory and the disappointment after a loss. Everyday nationalism manifests in the identity, pride, and community fostered through sports, initially within the nation and subsequently among the individuals comprising the nation itself. The competitive aspect of sports is what truly fosters a sense of nationalism. This competition extends beyond the tangible rewards, especially for the "fans" who avidly support the sport. It involves a collective appreciation for the glory and revitalization of the athletes' performances on the field, symbolizing the nation through their endeavors. However, this sense of glory is not confined to athletes from the same nation; in certain instances, it reflects pride in the success of one's envisioned community, aligning with Benedict Anderson's theory of nationalism.

Anderson (1997) wrote The fellow members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of the communion...Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity or genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.

Khoso, S. (2021) said the prime example illustrating my concept of the borderless "imagined community" is found in football clubs worldwide. Notable global entities include FC Barcelona (Spain), FC Real Madrid (Spain), Manchester United FC (England), Arsenal FC (England), Liverpool FC (England), Juventus (Italy), AC Milan (Italy), FC Bayern München (Germany), Borussia Dortmund (Germany), and numerous others deserving acknowledgment. These teams, now functioning as global brands in the era of neoliberal capitalism, boast more "followers" than the populations of many nations. For instance, if FC Real Madrid were a nation, it would surpass any European country in population, considering its 262 million online followers, in contrast to Russia, the most populous European nation, with 146 million people.

On the other side, the national anthem of Indonesia is "Indonesia Raya" (Great Indonesia). It plays a significant role in fostering nationalism and unity among the diverse population of the country. In essence, "Indonesia Raya" is not just a musical composition but a powerful cultural and historical symbol that continues to play a crucial role in shaping the collective identity and fostering nationalism among the people of Indonesia.

When football supporters sing the national anthem, "Indonesia Raya," in the context of sports events, particularly football matches, it amplifies the sense of nationalism and unity among the fans. The singing of the national anthem before football matches serves as a symbolic expression of unity among diverse groups of supporters. Fans from different backgrounds come together under the common identity of being Indonesian.

Singing the national anthem creates an emotional connection between the supporters and the nation. It fosters a sense of pride and patriotism, enhancing the overall atmosphere of the sporting event. The act of singing the national anthem is a sign of respect for the country, its history, and its symbols. It reflects a tradition embedded in the football culture of Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, exploring football supporters in Indonesia and their relationship with national identity, nationalism, and resilience unveils a rich tapestry of cultural, emotional, and socio-political dynamics. The passionate engagement of supporters from various clubs, such as The Jakmania, Aremania, and Bonek, showcases the profound impact of football fandom on the formation of collective identity and the expression of nationalism.

The study sheds light on the diverse approaches taken by different supporter groups, each contributing uniquely to the vibrant football culture in Indonesia. The significance of the national anthem, "Indonesia Raya," in uniting supporters and fostering a shared sense of pride during football events underscores the anthem's symbolic and unifying role.

Football supporters transcend mere fandom; they embody a form of everyday nationalism, actively shaping the cultural landscape and contributing to the resilience of the nation. The interplay of identity, nationalism, and football support underscores the complex nature of contemporary Indonesian society, navigating its diverse demographics through shared passions and collective expressions. As Indonesia continues to evolve, the role of football supporters remains integral to the nation's cultural narrative. The multifaceted relationships explored in this study provide a foundation for further research into the intricate dynamics of sports culture, identity formation, and their implications for national resilience in diverse societies. In essence, football supporters in Indonesia stand as cultural agents, weaving a narrative that reflects the nation's past, present, and aspirations for the future.

REFERENCE

- 1) Budiyo, A. (2020, December 7). *Loyalitas Tanpa Batas untuk Persija Itu Bernama The Jakmania*. <https://www.Skor.Id/Post/Loyalitas-Tanpa-Batas-Untuk-Persija-Itu-Bernama-the-Jakmania-01360231>.
- 2) García, C. (2012). *SCHOLARLY COMMENTARY Nationalism, Identity, and Fan Relationship Building in Barcelona Football Club CésarGarcía*. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303692983>

Identity, Nationalism, and the Impact on National Resilience: A Case Analysis of the Role of Football Supporters in Indonesia

- 3) Hambali, Y. (2012). *PERSEPSI MASYARAKAT PECINTA SEPAKBOLA TERHADAP NASIONALISME DAN IMPLIKASINYA BAGI KETAHANAN NASIONAL (Studi tentang Ekspresi Kelompok Suporter Sepak Bola The Jakmania Dalam Penyelenggaraan Piala AFF 2010)*.
- 4) Hidayat, Rahmat. (2018). *Peran Komunitas Suporter Sepak Bola dalam Pembentukan Perilaku Fanatik dan Implikasinya terhadap Ketahanan Pribadi Kelompok*.
- 5) Irawan, A. (2011). *Fanatisme Suporter Persebaya (Bonek Sakit Hati) di Kelurahan Pagesangan Kecamatan Jambangan Kota Surabaya. IAIN SUNAN AMPEL SURABAYA*.
- 6) Khoso, S. A. (2021). *Nationalism in Sports Identity Pride and Community*.
- 7) Perdana, N. (2018). *TINDAKAN AREMANIA DALAM MENENTUKAN PILIHAN KLUB AREMA YANG DIDUKUNG (STUDI KASUS SUPORTER AREMANIA DI KOTA MALANG)*.
- 8) Psilopatis, J. (2002). *Laporan Studi Lapangan AREMANIA: DARI LATAR BELAKANG HOOLIGANISME KE PARA SUPORTER SEPAK BOLA TELADAN*.



There is an Open Access article, distributed under the term of the Creative Commons Attribution – Non Commercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits remixing, adapting and building upon the work for non-commercial use, provided the original work is properly cited.