Research Horizon

Decentralized Communication Patterns and Solidarity in Indonesian Football Supporter Groups

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Abstract

This study examines the comprehensive communication patterns and forms of support within Brigata Curva Sud (BCS), the supporter group of PSS Sleman, which is known for its strong solidarity, creativity, and collective coordination. Unlike other football supporter organizations in Indonesia that adopt hierarchical leadership structures, BCS operates through a decentralized and participatory model where decisions are made collectively in forums. The research aims to explain and describe the communication patterns within the Brigata Curva Sud PSS Sleman supporter group in supporting PSS Sleman. Using a qualitative descriptive method with observation, interview, and documentation techniques, this study applies the concept of all-channel communication to analyze the interaction among members. The findings reveal that BCS's communication pattern allows open participation among members, fostering innovation in various support activities such as 90-minute chants, visual choreography, and economic initiatives through Curva Sud Shop (CSS). These practices not only sustain the group's identity but also strengthen the economic base of the club. The study implies that a non-hierarchical communication structure can enhance collective creativity, unity, and social impact within fan communities, serving as a model for other supporter organizations and community-based movements in Indonesia.

Keywords

Brigata Curva Sud, Collective Creativity, Communication Pattern, Football Culture, Organizational Communication, Supporter Community.

1. Introduction

Football is one of the most popular sports in Indonesia and plays a strong emotional and cultural role across different regions. Each region has its own football club competing in national leagues, ranging from League 3 to League 1. One prominent club is PSS Sleman from the Special Region of Yogyakarta, which is recognized not only for its competitive achievements, such as winning the 2018 Indonesian League 2 championship, but also for the organized and passionate support of its supporters, Brigata Curva Sud (BCS). Football and supporters are closely interconnected. Supporters are not merely spectators; they represent local identity and social solidarity formed through collective practices within football culture (Hodges, 2016). Although football supporter culture in Indonesia is often associated with violence and social conflict, that supporter group presents an alternative model as a disciplined, creative, and community-based.

Since its establishment in 2010, BCS has adopted the ultras subculture from Italy, which emphasizes extreme loyalty, visual creativity, and collective solidarity. This local adaptation of ultras culture demonstrates how global fandom practices can be positively reinterpreted within the Indonesian context, while also strengthening club identity and social cohesion among supporters (Nidhomuddin & Suryandari, 2021; Dahlan, 2022; Aulia, 2025).

The ultras subculture originated in Italy in the 1960s and later spread across Europe and Asia, emphasizing militant loyalty and a strong sense of belonging that goes beyond the football stadium (Gutu, 2015). Ultras practices are not limited to match days but form part of urban social identity through continuous collective activities (Ginhoux, 2015). In Sleman, the ultras model was not simply adopted but reinterpreted by BCS, which transformed the negative image of violent supporters into a culture of organized passion expressed through art, music, and social solidarity.

The supporter group functions as an umbrella organization composed of multiple smaller communities originating not only from Sleman but also from surrounding regions such as Magelang, Temanggung, and Surakarta, including international members (bcsxpss.com). These communities operate semi-autonomously while remaining united under the collective identity of Brigata Curva Sud. The principles of anonymity embodied in their slogan "No Face No Name" and egalitarianism reflected in "No Leader Just Together" demonstrate the rejection of formal hierarchy. Despite this, the supporter group maintains effective organization through informal coordination, where each sub-community is represented by a coordinator in collective forums that prioritize transparency and consensus. Open and egalitarian communication plays a central role in maintaining cohesion within the group. Through continuous interaction, members are able to express opinions freely, strengthen mutual trust, and reinforce a shared sense of belonging. This aligns with Djamarah's (2004) view that interaction is the concrete form of communication that builds understanding, unity, and shared objectives.

The presence of BCS contrasts sharply with the negative reputation often associated with Indonesian football supporters, particularly incidents of violence such as the 2018 supporter tragedy. Recognition by Copa90 as one of the best ultras groups in Asia highlights BCS's success in fostering a disciplined, communicative, and productive supporter culture. This achievement is consistent with recent studies showing that participatory communication and collective organization within supporter groups enhance internal solidarity, social control, and long-term community sustainability (Numerato, 2018; Poulton, 2021; Brawley et al., 2023; Cleland, 2024).

Based on this background, this study aims to examine and describe the communication processes within the Brigata Curva Sud PSS Sleman supporter

group, including inter-community communication patterns, and interpersonal as well as comprehensive communication practices in supporting PSS Sleman. Study contributes to the understanding of group communication dynamics within leaderless and informal communities, particularly those shaped by subcultural identities like ultras. The study is expected to provide insights for Brigata Curva Sud and similar supporter organizations to maintain effective, structured, and harmonious communication practices that enhance group cohesiveness and generate positive contributions for their football clubs and broader social environments.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Communication Patterns and Group Cohesion

Katz and Kahn (1978) and Mulyana (2013) emphasize that a structured and orderly system requires regulated communication among its members. Communication patterns can be understood as deliberately designed and continuous processes that connect communication elements, enabling individuals and organizations to think and act systematically. Message transmission follows established norms and occurs repeatedly, gradually forming distinctive communication behaviors. Within group settings, communication patterns function as a connecting mechanism that enables interaction and the formation of stable relational structures among members (Hardjana, 2016).

A communication pattern represents a simplified model illustrating the relationships among components in the communication process. Devito (2011) identifies five main communication network patterns: wheel, chain, Y, circle, and star, each reflecting different message flows and levels of member participation. Bungin (2008) defines group communication as interaction in which members can see, hear, and provide feedback to one another, both verbally and nonverbally. Groups are characterized by shared goals, collectively agreed-upon rules, and information flows that shape a unique group identity and collective character.

Group cohesion refers to the force that motivates members to remain within a group (Dion, 2000). Cohesion can be observed through interpersonal attraction, interest in group activities, and the extent to which the group fulfills members' needs. High levels of cohesion enhance feelings of security, openness, and communication frequency. Recent studies confirm that structured and participatory communication significantly contributes to stronger group cohesion, higher member satisfaction, and greater adherence to group norms (Salas et al., 2020; Keyton et al., 2022).

2.2. Group Achievement Theory

The Group Achievement Theory was introduced by Stodgill in 1959. This theory divides the factors influencing group performance into three main components: member input, mediating variables, and group achievement. According to Stodgill (1959), a group functions as an open system of interaction whose structure and continuity depend on members' actions and relationships. Member input serves as the primary source of input within the group. It consists of three essential elements: social interaction, which refers to reciprocal actions and reactions among members that form the basis of group dynamics; behavioral outcomes, which manifest in cooperative activities such as planning, evaluating, communicating, and decision-making; and expectations, which function as motivational drives based on members' anticipation of desirable results and the perceived likelihood of achieving them.

Mediating variables describe how a group operates and functions. These include formal structure, which encompasses the roles and statuses within the group, where each individual brings their own expectations and behaviors; and role structure, which involves the distribution of responsibilities and authority. The position an individual occupies may not significantly alter the status or function of that role

within the group system. Group achievement represents the output or goal of a group's collective efforts (Karau & Williams, 2014). It is determined by three main aspects: productivity, reflecting the degree of value created through group behavior; morale, indicating the extent of freedom from obstacles in achieving group goals; and unity, representing the group's ability to maintain its structure and operational mechanisms under pressure or stress.

2.3. Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication refers to face-to-face communication that occurs between two or more individuals, whether within an organizational context or among a group of people (Anggraini et al., 2022). Essentially, interpersonal communication takes place between a communicator and a communicant and is considered the most effective form of communication in influencing attitudes, opinions, or behaviors, as it involves direct interaction in the form of conversation. The immediacy of feedback enables the communicator to instantly gauge the communicant's responses, whether positive or negative, and to determine the success of the communication process. This directness also provides the communicant with the opportunity to ask questions freely, thus fostering mutual understanding and engagement. Interpersonal communication is inherently an active, rather than passive, activity. It is not merely a one-way transmission of messages from sender to receiver but rather a reciprocal exchange between both parties. It goes beyond a simple stimulus–response pattern, involving a dynamic process of mutual perception, absorption, and interpretation of messages, where both communicator and communicant continuously process and respond to each other's input.

According to Devito (2011) and Liliweri (2015) interpersonal relationships are characterized by openness, empathy, supportiveness, positivity, and equality. These characteristics create a conducive atmosphere for effective interpersonal communication, allowing participants to express themselves honestly while maintaining mutual respect. The stages of interpersonal relationships, which include the formation and reinforcement of interpersonal bonds, encompass intimacy, control, response accuracy, and the appropriateness of emotional tone. Together, these elements define the depth and quality of interpersonal communication within various social contexts

2.4. Football Supporter Communication

Football is one of the most popular sports in the world and is enjoyed by people from various social backgrounds and age groups. This sport cannot be separated from the presence of its supporters, who have distinctive characteristics compared to fans of other sports. According to Rumpoko (2018), football supporters differ mainly in terms of their large numbers and striking appearance. The popularity of football and the large capacity of stadiums allow massive supporter attendance. In terms of behavior, football supporters tend to be more fanatical and expressive in showing loyalty to their clubs. This excessive fanaticism often leads to negative public perceptions, such as being labeled anarchic or unruly, due to incidents that cause social and financial losses. In Indonesia, supporter groups are frequently stigmatized as the main cause of football-related riots because of their overzealous behavior. Football supporters also display diverse and unique forms of support, making them an essential part of football culture. Through chants, songs, coordinated movements, costumes, and visual displays, supporters actively shape the atmosphere of matches. As stated by Rumpoko (2018), supporters are more active, creative, and dynamic than ordinary spectators, participating directly in performances both inside and outside the stadium.

According to Kusuma (2017), football supporters have two contrasting dimensions: negative and positive. The negative dimension is associated with hooliganism, a violent subculture found among some European supporter groups,

characterized by aggression and territorial dominance. This behavior contributes to the negative image of football supporters globally. On the positive side, well-organized supporter communities can channel their enthusiasm into constructive activities, such as producing and selling merchandise to support their clubs. This demonstrates that supporter groups, when properly managed, can become valuable social and economic forces within football culture.

3. Methods

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research method to analyze the communication patterns of the Brigata Curva Sud (BCS) supporters in supporting PSS Sleman. The qualitative approach was chosen to explore the forms and characteristics of interpersonal and group communication within the community, emphasizing the process rather than the outcome. As such, the data are interpreted contextually and cannot be represented through statistical figures. Qualitative descriptive research aims to describe and reconstruct existing phenomena, whether naturally occurring or socially constructed, by prioritizing characteristics, qualities, and interrelationships between activities (Sukmadinata, 2017). Through this approach, the researcher seeks to obtain in-depth and comprehensive insights into how the BCS supporters organize and express their communication patterns during football support activities. This research adopts the post-positivist paradigm, which assumes that reality cannot be fully understood if the researcher maintains distance from it. Therefore, an interactive relationship between the researcher and the research context is essential. To ensure the credibility of findings, this study applies the principle of triangulation, involving multiple methods, data sources, and theoretical perspectives (Creswell, 2009).

The study focuses on the communication patterns within the Brigata Curva Sud community. Data collection employs a snowball sampling technique, selecting several informants considered knowledgeable and relevant to the research topic. Since BCS lacks a formal or permanent administrative structure, the researcher identifies initial informants among community members and then expands the sample gradually until the information obtained reaches a point of saturation. Two types of data sources are utilized: primary and secondary data. Primary data are collected directly from key informants, including community leaders and active members of the Brigata Curva Sud supporter group. These individuals are considered to possess a comprehensive understanding and firsthand experience related to the supporter organization's structure, activities, and communication culture. Meanwhile, secondary data are obtained from previous studies, relevant documents, and social media content that aligns with the research theme.

Data collection is conducted in a natural setting, where the researcher observes and interacts directly with participants. The primary techniques used include participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation (Sugiyono, 2017). Participant observation allows the researcher to gain contextual understanding through direct involvement in supporter activities, while interviews provide detailed information about experiences, perceptions, and motivations. Documentation complements these methods by providing visual or written evidence supporting the findings. The data are analyzed using the Miles and Huberman framework, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involves selecting and simplifying relevant information, data display organizes findings into structured narratives or visual forms, and conclusion drawing synthesizes the data into meaningful interpretations. To ensure data validity, the study employs triangulation across data sources, theories, researchers, and methods. This approach enhances the reliability and accuracy of findings, ensuring that interpretations reflect the actual communication dynamics within the Brigata Curva Sud supporter community.

4. Results

4.1. Communication Process Within the Supporter Group

Brigata Curva Sud (BCS) is one of the two main supporter groups of PSS Sleman, alongside Slemania. Founded in 2010, the group occupies the southern stand of Maguwoharjo International Stadium and adopts the slogan "No Leader, Just Together," which reflects its anti-hierarchical ideology and rejection of formal leadership (Yoursay.id, 2022). Despite being leaderless, the group enforces strict internal rules, including wearing black attire and singing throughout matches. To coordinate activities, BCS uses various communication platforms such as social media and websites. BCS established Curva Sud Shop (CSS) as a merchandise enterprise, which supports the club financially and serves as a symbolic effort to promote a disciplined, creative, and socially responsible supporter culture.

Negative stereotypes toward Indonesian football supporters remain prevalent in public discourse, particularly on social media. BCS consciously challenges these perceptions by promoting an organized and creative supporter culture. Accounts from long-standing members indicate that the group emerged from dissatisfaction with Slemania's rigid organizational structure and political interference, which were perceived as limiting creativity and collective expression.

Their slogan "No Leader, Just Together" serves as a guiding principle, positioning all members as equal contributors and emphasizing collective decision-making through open forums. This egalitarian approach encourages shared responsibility, self-discipline, and inclusivity, including the establishment of the women's division, Ladies Curva Sud (LCS). Through consistent organization, creativity, and collective solidarity, BCS has gained international recognition. COPA90 (2017) ranked BCS as Asia's Best Ultras in its feature "Top 5 Incredible Asian Ultras." Despite global recognition, the group continues to prioritize loyalty to PSS Sleman and commitment to its local community, demonstrating that effective communication and shared values can sustain large-scale supporter movements without formal leadership.

Based on interviews and field observations, the communication system within the supporter group operates in an organized and effective manner despite the absence of a formal leadership structure. BCS divides its internal coordination into four zones: west, north, east, and south, each managed by a coordinator appointed through the BCS general forum. This forum functions as the primary space for deliberation, decision-making, and policy formation. The democratic appointment of coordinators without hierarchical authority reflects BCS's core principle.

Regional coordinators serve as intermediaries between the general forum and the sub-communities within their zones. Their responsibilities include coordinating home and away matches, distributing tickets, disseminating information, and organizing supporters in the stands. This communication pattern enables dynamic interaction among members without reliance on a single leader. During matches, coordination is carried out through nonverbal communication such as hand signals, chants, and specific singing patterns, which function effectively to organize large crowds in a short time.

In terms of interpersonal communication, BCS applies a two-way communication model involving coordinators or senior members as communicators and all members as communicants. Communication takes place both face-to-face through forums and via digital media. Members emphasize that information must flow downward and upward, ensuring openness, equality, and active participation from all members. Daily communication among members uses informal language, combining Javanese and Indonesian, which strengthens emotional bonds and reinforces a shared group identity. Specific terms such as chant, *corteo*, choreo, wall of death, and *nobar* are commonly used and have become part of BCS's internal communication culture.

Nonverbal expressions, including gestures, facial expressions, choreography, and visual symbols in the stadium, further support interpersonal interaction.

4.2. Inter-Community Communication Patterns within the Supporter Group

The communication system within the Brigata Curva Sud supporter group operates in an organized manner despite the absence of a formal leadership structure. Unlike Slemania, which follows a single-leader model, BCS explicitly rejects centralized leadership and adopts the manifesto slogan as its organizational foundation. This principle emphasizes equality in status, rights, and responsibilities among all members.

In practice, coordination within BCS is carried out through territorial divisions known as sezione (west, north, east, and south). Each sezione is guided by a volunteer community coordinator who does not hold formal authority but is responsible for mobilizing members, managing ticket distribution, attending general forums, and facilitating the flow of information and aspirations within the community.

The forum functions as the central communication mechanism in BCS and consists of small forums and a general forum. Small forums collect internal ideas, while the general forum discusses and finalizes collective decisions. There is no permanent chairperson. Instead, mediation roles rotate among experienced coordinators. Communication occurs through an open, two-way process that encourages active participation and feedback from all members. Once agreements are reached, decisions are disseminated through BCS's official social media platforms to ensure transparency and shared understanding.

Communication between community coordinators and members of BCS operates systematically and in an organized manner despite the absence of a formal leadership structure. That supporter group divides its coordination into four sezione that oversee hundreds of region-based communities, located not only in Yogyakarta but also across other parts of Indonesia and abroad. Membership verification data prior to the 2022 Liga 1 season indicate that more than 400 active communities were recorded, each consisting of a substantial number of members.

Community coordinators play a vital role in distributing match tickets, managing member data, conveying information from forums, and channeling members' aspirations to the general forum. However, they do not possess unilateral decision-making authority, as all decisions are made collectively through forums. Communication is conducted both face-to-face and through social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Twitter. During the COVID-19 pandemic, communication shifted to Zoom meetings and WhatsApp groups. BCS's open and intensive communication pattern contributes positively to member loyalty, collective responsibility, and strong social cohesion within the group. This recurring and structured communication pattern contributes to the development of an effective, cohesive, and well-connected group communication network within BCS.

4.3. Interpersonal and Comprehensive Communication Patterns

Interpersonal communication among members of the Brigata Curva Sud takes place actively and dynamically without direct dependence on community coordinators. Members communicate both face-to-face and through digital media to discuss group activities, internal issues, and topics beyond football. This open communication culture allows members to respond to information, provide feedback, and express opinions freely, with many initiating ideas before they are conveyed to coordinators.

Interpersonal interactions within BCS also extend beyond match support to social and personal relationships. Through interactions at the stadium, community forums, and social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Twitter, members build familiarity, solidarity, and a strong sense of belonging, strengthening interpersonal bonds within the supporter community.

Brigata Curva Sud is widely recognized as a large, loyal, and creative supporter group with a communication pattern that differs from many other football supporter groups in Indonesia. Unlike groups such as The Jakmania, Brajamusti, or Viking Persib Club, which rely on a single chairman or leader, BCS rejects centralized leadership. Instead, the forum functions as the highest authority where all decisions, movements, and aspirations are discussed and agreed upon collectively. All members have equal rights to express opinions, criticisms, and suggestions, either directly in forums or through social media platforms. The communication system applied within BCS follows an all-channel model, allowing members to communicate freely without hierarchical barriers. This open and egalitarian structure encourages the emergence of new ideas that become the foundation of BCS's creative forms of support for PSS Sleman.

In terms of match-day support, BCS is known for its continuous chanting throughout the full 2×45 minutes of a match. Thousands of members in the southern stand of Maguwoharjo Stadium sing in unison, creating an intense atmosphere that motivates the players. The slogan "If you give us 90 minutes, we'll give you a lifetime" symbolizes total loyalty and dedication to the team.

BCS also presents large-scale artistic choreographies that convey moral support, criticism, and historical narratives of PSS Sleman. Beyond the stadium, BCS strengthens its economic role through their shop, which supports the club financially and reinforces group identity. Annual events such as Curva Sud Fest and community gatherings further enhance creativity, solidarity, and a strong culture of collective support.

5. Discussion

The communication pattern within the Brigata Curva Sud (BCS) supporter group demonstrates an egalitarian, horizontal, and participatory communication system without a formal leadership structure. The "No Leader, Just Together" principle emphasizes BCS's rejection of the hierarchical model commonly used by other supporter groups. Coordination and decision-making are conducted through a forum as the highest authority, allowing every member to have an equal opportunity to express their opinions. This pattern distinguishes BCS from groups like Slemania or Viking, which have a leader as the center of power.

BCS's communication structure is implemented through a decentralized system called seizione, which divides the coordination area into four zones: west, east, north, and south. Each zone is guided by a volunteer community coordinator who holds no formal authority. Their role is more as a liaison between members and the central forum. This pattern reflects a decentralized communication system, which aligns with Mulyana's (2013) and Putri and Fathiyah (2025) view that social order is formed through complementary communication roles.

In the context of interpersonal communication, interactions between BCS members demonstrate the characteristics of effective two-way communication. As explained by Devito (2011), effective interpersonal communication is characterized by openness, empathy, and a willingness to accept feedback. BCS members freely respond to messages both through face-to-face meetings and online. This strengthens a sense of belonging and strengthens social ties, in line with Mulyana (2000) and Yunianto (2025), who emphasize the importance of direct perception of verbal and nonverbal responses.

The BCS communication phenomenon is also characterized by the use of distinctive symbols and language as group identity. Chants, choreography, and slogans such as "If you give us 90 minutes, we'll give you a lifetime" serve as symbols of solidarity. Bungin (2008) states that groups with strong communication will develop collective symbols, which in the BCS context serve as a means of expression and differentiation from other groups. Research findings also indicate that the BCS

communication system aligns with Mukarom's (2020) Group Achievement Theory, which encompasses input, process, and output. Input originates from community discussions, the process is facilitated by a coordinator without formal authority, and output is reflected in high cohesiveness, creativity, and the ability to manage large groups in an orderly manner without a single leader.

Social cohesion in BCS is formed through interpersonal attraction, engagement in creative activities, and satisfaction with freedom of expression. This aligns group cohesion arises from members' interest and involvement in a common goal. The BCS horizontal communication model also aligns with Devito's (2011) equality model, where communication occurs equally without domination. Every decision is made through collective deliberation, fostering transparency, member loyalty, and group stability.

In addition to internal communication, BCS utilizes digital media such as Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp as a means of ongoing communication. This aligns with Stogdill's (1959) open systems theory, which emphasizes the importance of interaction with the external environment for the survival of social systems. Thus, BCS's communication patterns demonstrate that group effectiveness does not depend on formal structures or a single leader. Through an egalitarian, symbolic, and participatory system, BCS builds communication as the foundation of collective identity, social solidarity, and cultural expression. Their principle represents the community's core values, which uphold equality, togetherness, and loyalty.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal that the communication pattern within the Brigata Curva Sud supporter group operates through four interconnected forms: inter-community communication, communication between coordinators and members, interpersonal communication among members, and the overall communication system of the group. These patterns reflect an egalitarian and participatory structure in which no single leader dominates decision-making. Instead, all members have equal opportunities to express opinions, share ideas, and participate in discussions through forums that serve as the highest authority. The communication system functions effectively both face-to-face and digitally, characterized by openness, solidarity, and mutual respect. This structure strengthens group cohesion and reinforces collective identity while enabling BCS to maintain high levels of coordination and creativity in supporting PSS Sleman.

This study, however, is limited to a descriptive analysis of BCS's internal communication structure, primarily focusing on qualitative observation and interviews within a single supporter group. Future research should explore comparative studies among different supporter communities or employ quantitative methods such as Social Network Analysis (SNA) or PLS-SEM to measure communication effectiveness and its impact on group solidarity. For BCS itself, maintaining the existing participatory and educational approach is crucial in preserving unity and positive public perception. Moreover, Indonesian football supporters in general should be viewed through a more balanced lens, recognizing that supporter groups like BCS embody constructive communication, creativity, and social solidarity rather than merely negative stereotypes.

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Conflict of Interest Statement
The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval and Originality Statement
Ethical approval was obtained for this study. The manuscript represents original work and has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration by another journal.

Data Disclosure Statement
The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.