

Original Research

A socio-onomastic study of the 2022 FIFA World Cup football teams' nicknames

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Despite growing research interest into the language of sports, little research investigates football teams' nicknames significance and fan attitudes. The objective of this study is two-fold: to explore Jordanian youth attitudes and views towards these nicknames using a close-ended questionnaire, and to classify and analyse the nicknames into different categories from a socio-onomastic perspective. The study aims to answer two research questions. 1. What are the socio-onomastic categories of the 22nd World Cup football teams' nicknames? 2. What are the views and attitudes of Jordanian youth towards the 22nd World Cup football teams' nicknames? The current study uses a mixed methods approach. A list of the 22nd World Cup football teams' nicknames was collected from several football sources. These nicknames were classified and analysed from a socio-onomastic perspective based on Skipper (1990), Leslie and Skipper (1990), and Wilson and Skipper (1990). In addition, a close-ended questionnaire was developed and distributed to 1,000 undergraduate students from different Jordanian public universities. The data analysis reveals that the Jordanian fans, while aware of the origin and meanings of their teams' nicknames, do not use them exclusively in their discourse. The findings demonstrate that around three quarters of the Jordanian fans follow the 22nd World Cup teams due to reasons other than geographical or ethnic affiliation. The results also show that football team nicknames can be complex in their construction from a socio-onomastic perspective and capitalise on different national, animal, metaphorical, and cultural symbols. Further research is recommended on the importance of national football nicknames in light of increased globalisation and commercialisation of sports, and utilisation of nicknames by different users and on different platforms.

KEYWORDS: socio-onomastics, nickname, football language, FIFA, world cup, sports language



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1. INTRODUCTION

Big sporting events are seen as opportunities to foster a sense of international unity and solidarity, where sports are viewed as a 'powerful signifier of identity' and a 'source of cultural symbolism' (Houlihan, 1997, p. 135). In international sporting tournaments, such as the 22nd FIFA World Cup, national teams represent their culture, geography, and history. With that in mind, national teams often have nicknames that tend to reflect part of their country's identity. Names, by their nature, reflect a substantial part of society, and therefore cannot be considered outside of it. This extends to nicknames in sports as they are consciously constructed by different actors, such as governments, coaches and media, in an attempt to form, emphasise, and substantiate a country's or nation's identity (Awad, 2012; Kleszynski, 2013). The use of football teams' nicknames is

an interesting stylistic feature where they are used to refer to names that are generally accepted by news reporters and football audiences (Huang et al., 2021). Since the way in which people utilise language in sports depends on the 'cultural norms that surround them' (Wilson, 2021, p. 2), investigating the sports language is integral to 'research on the creation of a culture that has meaning in the lives of all people who participate in sport' (Wilson, 2021, p. 2). The current study aims to examine the origin and diversity of the World Cup 2022 teams' nicknames through a socio-onomastic lens, where national, historical, geographical, animal, metaphorical, and cultural elements in their nicknames are investigated.

The World Cup is a large-scale global event where national teams have developed a wide base of international fans, who identify with them at different levels (Vallerand et al., 2008).

‘Onomastics is a diverse and rich field under which many name categories and subcategories are subsumed. These include toponomastics, i.e., the study of place names; anthroponomastics, i.e., the study of personal or proper names; literary onomastics, i.e., the study of the names in literature and other types of fiction; and socio-onomastics, i.e., the study of names within a society or culture’

Football teams’ nicknames are emotionally provocative and can flame the passions of their fans (Lawson & Phillips, 1985). Understanding how international fans perceive the 22nd World Cup teams’ nicknames is pertinent. Therefore, the present study explores the Jordanian fans’ perspectives regarding these nicknames. In particular, the present study aims to answer the following questions. 1. What are the socio-onomastic categories of the 22nd World Cup football teams’ nicknames? 2. What are the views and attitudes of Jordanian youth towards the 22nd World Cup football teams’ nicknames?

To address these questions, the study establishes the theoretical framework of the research, followed by a short review of related literature in nicknaming in football. Then, the adopted research methodology is discussed. After that, the data analysis and findings are explained. The final section comprises concluding remarks and implications for further research.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The current study uses a mixed method approach to provide both qualitative and quantitative data (Bryman, 2012; Craswell, 2015). For the purpose of collecting and presenting quantitative data, the researchers developed a 12 close-ended statement questionnaire to explore Jordanian fans’ attitudes towards the 22nd World Cup football teams’ nicknames. Once the statements were developed, they were evaluated by three expert linguistics professors in different Jordanian public universities, to assess the language and clarity of the statements. Their recommendations were minimal and focused on question order and word choice. All were incorporated into the questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed using Google Forms and was accessible to the participants during the whole 22nd World Cup tournament, 20 November – 18 December 2022. The reason behind that decision was to utilise the interest of the respondents in such a big international tournament. The questionnaire was filled in by 1000 undergraduate students from different public universities in Jordan.

For the qualitative data collection, several procedures were adopted. A list of the participating national football teams’ nicknames in the 22nd World Cup was sourced from football organisations and associations, such as Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), FIFA 22nd World Cup 2022, Asian Football confederations (AFC), Confederation of African Football (CAF), Confederation of North, Central America and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF), CONfederación Su-

daMericana de Fútbol South American Football Confederation (CONMEBOL), and Union of European Football Associations (UEFA). Additionally, the websites of the national associations of the football teams participating in 22nd World Cup were used to verify their nicknames. If national football teams have more than one nickname, a Google-based search (country + national football team’s nickname) was used to identify the most popular one, highly used in the media. In some cases, two nicknames or more for the same football team were selected because the researchers were not able to identify the most common one. This explains why the total number of the investigated nicknames reached 40 although the number of 22nd World Cup football teams was 32.

The 40 nicknames were classified into five categories, namely flag, animal, metaphor, culture, and direct national team title, to elicit and analyse the distinctive features of these nicknames from a socio-onomastic point of view. The qualitative-based analysis depends mainly on Skipper (1990), Leslie and Skipper (1990), and Wilson and Skipper (1990). Out of the five, four were subcategorised according to the reference they represent. The flag-based category was divided into colour-related and symbolism-related references. The animal-based category includes lions, birds, dragons, and kangaroos. The metaphor-based category involves war, persistence, and exploration. Finally, the culture-based reference comprises references related to local dance, song, and language. The national team title category is the only one with no subcategories, where all the associated nicknames directly refer to the football team. It is important to note that despite this categorisation, these nicknames are complex, and the categorisation is intended to facilitate the presentation of data and discussion as the following sections will show.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theoretical framework of the current research is positioned within the context and relevant scholarly literature on onomastics, particularly socio-onomastics. This theoretical framework serves as a roadmap for justifying the significance of the work (Lederman & Lederman, 2015; Kivunja, 2018). Onomastics is the study of names. It is a diverse and rich field under which many name categories and subcategories are subsumed. These include toponomastics, i.e., the study of place names; anthroponomastics, i.e., the study of personal or proper names; literary onomastics, i.e., the study of the names in literature and other types of fiction; and socio-onomastics, i.e., the study of names within a society or culture (Hough, 2016; Ainiala & Östman, 2017). The continued research interest in name meanings and origin socially and culturally has a long history and is ‘arguably the most ancient topic area in the whole of linguistics since it was first problematised by Plato in his *Cratylus*, and it is, notwithstanding its antiquity, one with foundational problems still to be resolved’ (Coates, 2006, p. 7). Socio-onomastics is a linguistic branch linking language with the notions of culture and society where names usually reflect linguistic structures and socio-cultural meanings. Socio-onomastics is defined as ‘a study of

people's beliefs and perceptions regarding names and name use' (Ainiala, 2016, p. 106). It examines socio-linguistic and pragmatic manifestations of names and their identities socially, culturally, and linguistically (Ainiala & Östman, 2017; Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985). Much of socio-onomastics research has focused on toponyms, with little research into nicknames and bynames (Skipper, 1990). Nicknaming in sports, particularly football, has received increased scholarly attention due to the popularity of the sport and the multifaceted nature of football-related nicknames (Awad, 2012).

Leslie and Skipper (1990) argue that 'names are not just arbitrary symbols; they signify status, achievement, privilege, and meaningful social organisation. They may communicate ethnicity, social status, and social prestige all understood as meaningful within social contexts' (Leslie & Skipper, 1990, p. 273). Pfukwa (2003) contends that a nickname is 'a social statement reflecting the bearer, the namer and the social environment in which the name is found' (Pfukwa, 2003, p. 16). Similarly, Kostanski and Puzey (2016) claim that nicknames are powerful means with cultural influence and social interaction among individuals, adding that nicknames are strongly linked to identity and used to show community norms, connections, and reliance (Kostanski & Puzey, 2016). The centrality of nicknaming to the construction of identity requires more extensive research (Ainiala & Östman, 2017). Besides its official name, every football team in international tournaments bears a popular nickname with implied meanings and flavours. These nicknames evoke certain emotions related to identity, performance, culture, geographic localities, or place of origin (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985; Kostanski & Puzey, 2016).

Despite continuing interest in onomastic research in general, and the language of sports in particular (Wilson, 2021), few studies have examined nicknaming practices in football in relation to international audiences. Examining the role of the nicknaming of footballers and their respective local teams in the African context, Ndimande-Hlongwa (2010) found that teams' nicknames illustrate Africa's multilingual culture and communities' role in influencing football nicknaming practices. Out of the 16 nicknames investigated, 12 were found to originate from different South African language groups, a country with 12 official languages. The author concludes that the unanimous adoption and social use of these names underpins football's role in 'nation-building, unification, respect, mutual understanding and in transcending cultural boundaries' (Ndimande-Hlongwa, 2010, p. 96). The study recommends research be carried out to examine the cultural, social, and political roles of football nicknames. Awad (2012) carried out a socio-linguistic analysis of football teams' nicknames in the 2010 South Africa World Cup. The study explored the use of nicknames to emphasise and substantiate national identity and solidarity by utilising an eclectic approach combining audience design, mask theory, and critical discourse analysis. The study classified nicknames into six conceptual metaphors related to war, animals, colour, dancing, masculinity, and others. According to Awad (2012), animal and colour

metaphors constitute more than half of the nicknames with a 57% prevalence. Mambwe and Da Costa (2015) explored the connotative meaning, specific features, and source of nicknames of selected national football teams in the South Africa World Cup 2010. The research found that the football nicknaming practices reveal the identity of local societies, people's pride in distinct national characteristics, and patriotism for their respective nation's most endeared natural resource. Babane and Chauke (2015) examine nicknaming in the South African context, but with a focus on players' nicknames rather than teams. Based on semi-structured interviews of 10 players, the study found that the nicknames were given based on player behaviour, performance, style, and commitment, and that these names are usually given to players by fans, teammates, or coaches. The study also found that players tend to be called by their nicknames rather than their personal names. Nyambi (2016) explores the impact of football team nicknaming based on Zimbabwean national identity. The study underscored the semantic and political functions of two footballing nicknames, i.e., Warriors and Mighty Warriors, used by the ruling party for the purposes of 'political re-engineering of gender and power relations in the party and nation' (Nyambi, 2016, p. 15). The power of these two nicknames in the Zimbabwean context has transcended sports and was a useful vehicle to serve the political goals and narrative of the ruling party.

What can be gleaned from these studies is that football is closely linked to identity, culture, society, geography, and history. Therefore, investigating different aspects of football language can provide an understanding of the world in which we live (Wilson, 2021). Olimat (2020) contends that language plays an instrumental role in understanding people's socio-cultural behaviours. This is also true of the power language has within football. Ndimande-Hlongwa (2010) argues that team nicknames are not chosen arbitrarily, and that they convey prowess, determination to prevail, a fighting spirit, and other emotionally provocative thoughts. The previous studies have also shown that football nicknames can be used by many actors, i.e., governments, fans, media, to serve numerous purposes. Despite the growing research into socio-onomastics, however, more research on football teams' nicknames within global sport events, such as the World Cup is needed. In the current study, the analytical investigation of the 22nd World Cup football teams' nicknames is supported by quantitative data, i.e., the statistics, numbers, and percentages, of Jordanian fans' views and attitudes towards these nicknames.

4. STUDY RESULTS

4.1. Perspective analysis

To better understand Jordanian youth's attitudes towards the nicknames of players in football teams, part one of the survey includes their response to an introductory statement to elicit information about their favourite team in the 22nd World Cup tournament. In their responses, Brazil came first (25.9%) followed by Argentina (20.5%) and Saudi Arabia (19.1%).

Part two of the survey contains five statements. In statement one, more than three quarters of the respondents indicated that they do not follow their teams due to regional affiliation. Similarly, in statement two, about three quarters of respondents signalled that ethnic similarity is not the reason they chose to follow their team. In statement three, the majority of the responses, totalling 84.6%, stated that a team's sports performance is the main reason for choosing a favourite team. In statement four, 75% of the respondents said that they chose their favourite team because of its players. The responses to the four statements are supported by the opening statement of the questionnaire that asked respondents to choose their 22nd World Cup favourite team. Although the 22nd World Cup had four Arab teams, Saudi

Arabia, Qatar, Morocco, and Tunisia, the two most favoured teams were not Arab teams. In response to statement four, which inquired about the feeling evoked upon hearing their favourite team nickname, 27% of respondents felt proud, 26.7% felt happy, 14.5% felt motivated, while 11.8% felt connected to the team and 9.4% felt powerful. Of the 1,000 respondents, only 10.3% said they felt nothing.

These findings would support the arguments advocated by Feng et. al (2020) on the role of nicknames in team-fan relationship building and identification.

Table 1 below summarises the respondents' answers to the five statements of the second part of the questionnaire concerning reasons for following favourite 22nd World Cup teams.

Table 1
Jordanians' reasons for following favourite 22nd World Cup teams

| No. | STATEMENT | ANSWERS | |
|-----|--|-----------|-------|
| | | YES | NO |
| 1. | I follow my favourite team in the World Cup because it is from my region. | 76.1% | 23.9% |
| 2. | I follow my favourite team in the World Cup because we share the same ethnicity. | 71.8% | 28.2% |
| 3. | I follow my favourite team in the World Cup because it has a good football record and performance. | 84.6% | 15.4% |
| 4. | I follow my favourite team in the World Cup because I like some of its players. | 75% | 25% |
| 5. | When I hear the nickname of my football team, I feel_____. | proud | 27% |
| | | happy | 26.7% |
| | | motivated | 14.8% |
| | | connected | 11.8% |
| | | strong | 9.4% |
| | | nothing | 10.3% |

Part three of the questionnaire has 6 statements examining Jordanian youth's knowledge of football teams' nicknames. The responses to these statements support previous studies (Feng et. al 2020) indicating that nicknames have copious functions, such as breaking down barriers, promoting closeness for fans, and facilitating identification with the team. In responses to statements 1-3 around three quarters of respondents noted that they knew the team's nickname and its meaning, while about two thirds of them knew their team's nickname origin. The responses to statement 4 were very close, where 51.6% of the respondents believed that it was important to have a team nickname, while 48.4% did not believe that it was important. Although about three quarters of the participants knew their team's nickname, more than half of them opted to use its official name in discourse instead, as appears in responses to statement 5. In this sense,

38.7% said that they used both the team's official name and nickname, and only 6.3% signalled that they used only the team's nickname. Studies of the language of sports have indicated that the language fans use to describe their team, should be considered a sub-variety of football language (Lewandowski, 2008), and it would be interesting to explore when and how fans use teams' different names and nicknames. Statement six asked respondents to choose what they believed would make the most impressive nickname. Nicknames with a national reference came first with 58.2%, followed by animal reference (21.3%), military reference (10.3%) and artistic reference (10.2%). It would seem that nicknames associated with national and animal references have higher importance for respondents in comparison to the rest. Table 2 summarises respondents' answers to these statements.

Table 2

Jordanians' knowledge of their favourite 22nd World Cup teams' nicknames information

| No. | STATEMENT | ANSWERS | |
|-----|--|------------------------|-------|
| | | YES | NO |
| 1. | I know the nickname of my favourite team. | 73.4% | 26.6% |
| 2. | The meaning of my football team's nickname is clear to me. | 72.6% | 27.4% |
| 3. | The origin of my football team's nickname is clear to me. | 66.5% | 33.5% |
| 4. | It is important for me that my football team has a nickname. | 51.6% | 48.4% |
| 5. | When I talk about my favourite team, I use its_____. | official name | 55% |
| | | official and nickname | 38.7% |
| | | nickname | 6.3% |
| 6. | In my opinion, the most impressive football teams' nicknames are those that are associated with a/an_____. | national reference | 48.1% |
| | | animal reference | 21.3% |
| | | metaphorical reference | 10.3% |
| | | artistic reference | 10.2% |
| | | other | 9.9% |

4.2. Socio-onomastic analysis

The World Cup 2022 team's nicknames are classified and analysed according to the reference they represent, including flag, animal, metaphor, culture, and national team title. Koller (2004) observes that several words related to 'wars', 'animals' and 'colours' are popular when creating football teams' nicknames. Although there are 32 national teams participating in the 22nd World Cup in Qatar, the total number of investigated nicknames is 40. Some teams have more than one common nickname, used by broadcasters, fans, and news outlets. Thus, some teams can be found in more than one group. Table 3 illustrates the suggested categories along with their subcategories and their frequency.

4.2.1. Flag-based reference

Teams' nicknames based on flag-based reference incorporate elements from the national flag of their countries. These elements could either be a colour or a symbol, and as such are all related to the country's national identity. In this regard, nearly half of the survey respondents stated that nicknames with a national reference were the most impressive. The analysis reveals that flag-based references are used 16 times in the creation of the teams' nicknames, divided into two main subcategories: flag colour-based reference and flag symbolism-based reference.

Flag colour-based reference. This subcategory consists of 9 teams where the colour of the national flag plays a significant role in the nickname practices. For example, Qatar's team nick-

name is the Maroons, which is the predominant colour in the Qatari national flag. Similarly, Saudi Arabia's team is commonly known as 'Al-Akhdar' meaning 'The Greens' in reference to the dominant colour of the Saudi flag. Green holds religious and historical connotations in the prevailing religion of Saudi Arabia, Islam. The colour appears in numerous verses in the Quran, particularly in reference to paradise and it is traditionally associated with prosperity and good life. It is concluded that the two Arab countries' football teams' nicknames depend mainly on their national flag's prevailing colour (Awad, 2012; Kleszynski, 2013).

In the European context, the flag colour-based reference is most frequently encountered in the teams' nicknames. For instance, Denmark's football team is nicknamed 'De Rød-Hvide' meaning 'The Red and Whites', which is inspired by their national flag. Likewise, Poland is known as 'Biało-czerwoni' meaning 'The White and Red', which are the dominant colours in their national flag. Additionally, the Spanish football team is known as 'La Roja' meaning 'The Red One', in accordance with the red colour of the flag's horizontal top and bottom stripes (Delgado, 2010). Furthermore, France's team is called 'Les Blues' meaning 'The Blues', in reference to the blue jersey of the team's uniform along with some white and red, in an echo of the French flag. The excessive use of colours in European teams' nicknames may refer to the fact that these unofficial names associated with colour-based references were friendly enough for fans and closely linked with the colour of the team's uniform (Craswell, 2015).

Table 3
Categories of the 2022 FIFA World Cup teams' nicknames

| No. | CATEGORY | SUB-CATEGORIES | FREQUENCY | TOTAL |
|-----|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------|-------|
| 1. | Flag colour-based | Flag colour-based | 9 | 16 |
| | | Flag symbolism-based | 7 | |
| 2. | Animal-based reference | Lion-based | 5 | 12 |
| | | Bird-based | 5 | |
| | | Mythical animal | 1 | |
| | | Kangaroo | 1 | |
| 3. | Metaphor-based reference | War/Military | 2 | 4 |
| | | Persistence | 1 | |
| | | Exploration | 1 | |
| 4. | Culture-based reference | Dance | 2 | 4 |
| | | Song | 2 | |
| | | Language | 1 | |
| 5. | National title reference | National team title | 4 | 4 |

However, there are two national teams from South America adopting colour in their nicknames. Argentina's team is known as 'La Albiceleste' meaning 'The White and Sky Blue'. This nickname has been inspired from the white and blue stripes in their national flag representing the sky and clouds. Likewise, Uruguay's football team is called 'La Celeste' meaning 'The Sky Blue' in reference to the colour of their national flag. It can be concluded that football teams use colour-based nicknames to showcase national symbols, including the demonstration of the flag as well as clothing and colours of the team's uniform.

As seen in the above discussion, a team's colour-based nickname often tends to reflect its national flag. However, this is not the exact case of the Netherland's nickname, i.e., 'Oranje', even though their nickname is related to the historical development of their flag. Orange is the colour of the Dutch royal family and has been the national colour of the Netherlands for a long time. The flag dates from the Eighty Years' Independence War between the Netherlands and Spain (1568-1648) when the rebel provinces fought under the colours of the coat of arms of the Prince of Orange: orange, white, and blue. Later, the orange bar of the horizontal tricolour of the official Dutch flag was changed to red, while the white and blue colours were kept. However, the orange flag is still flown on public holidays associated with the royal family (Poels, 2011).

Table 4 lists the football teams' nicknames with flag colour-based reference.

Flag symbolism-based reference. There are 7 football teams' nicknames that utilise several national symbols found on the flags. The Canadian team is called the Maple Leafs, in reference to the national symbol of Canada that appears on the Canadian flag, and the badge worn by soldiers in the Canadian Army during World War I (Barney & Heine, 2015). In the European context, the Croatian team is called 'Kockasti' meaning 'The Checkered Ones' and is inspired by the checkered red and white shield in the centre of the flag (Feng et al., 2020). The Swiss national football team is called 'The Rossocrociati' meaning 'The Red Cross', which comes from Switzerland's square-shaped flag depicting a white cross on a red background (Feng et al., 2020). Ecuador's team nickname is 'La Tri' or 'La Tricolour' based on the three main colours in the flag background, yellow, blue, and red (Berg, 2013). Likewise, the Mexican team is called 'El Tri' meaning 'The Tricolour', which corresponds to the three colours of Mexico's flag (Huck, 2017). Ghana is the only African team in the World Cup 2022 which uses the flag-symbolism-based reference in their nickname, i.e., the Black Stars. This nickname originated from the black star at the centre of Ghana's flag. The black star has its roots in African liberation and anti-colonialism, and it refers to Africa in general and Ghana in particular (Gaines, 2006). Finally, the United States team is called 'The Stars and Stripes' in reference to their national flag (Feng et al., 2020). Table 5 illustrates the team nicknames with flag symbolism-based reference.

Table 4
Teams' nicknames with flag colour-based references

| No. | TEAM | NICKNAME |
|-----|--------------|---|
| 1. | Qatar | The Maroon |
| 2. | Saudi Arabia | Al-Akhdar (The Greens) |
| 3. | Denmark | De Rød-Hvide (The Red and Whites) |
| 4. | Poland | Biało-czerwoni (The White and Red) |
| 5. | France | Les Bleus (The Blues) |
| 6. | Spain | La Roja (The Red One) |
| 7. | Argentina | La Albiceleste (The White and Sky Blue) |
| 8. | Uruguay | La Celeste (The Sky Blue) |
| 9. | Netherlands | Oranje (Orange) |

Table 5
Teams' nicknames with flag symbolism-based references

| No. | TEAM | NICKNAME |
|-----|-------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. | Canada | The Maple Leaves |
| 2. | Croatia | Kockasti (The Chequered Ones) |
| 3. | Switzerland | Rossocrociati (Red Crosses) |
| 4. | Ecuador | La Tricolour (The Tricolours) |
| 5. | Mexico | El Tri (The Tricolour) |
| 6. | Ghana | The Black Stars |
| 7. | USA | The Stars and Stripes |

4.2.2. Animal-based reference

More than a third of the teams' nicknames utilise an animal-based reference. Feng et al. (2020) found that football teams' nicknames have a special preference for animals, commonly recognised for their strength, such as lions. The analysis of the respondents' answers shows that animal-based references came second in their preferences with 21.1%. Out of 32, there are 12 national teams using animal-related references. The animals most depicted include lion references (5) and bird references including different species (5) (three eagle, one falcon, and one canary reference). In addition to lions and birds, there is one reference to a mythical animal (dragon) as well as one reference to a kangaroo.

The majority of African national teams have nicknames related to an animal reference alone, or a combination of references associated with animals. These nicknames seem to be in-

spired by the associations with and significance of the animal names to African culture and tradition. According to Olupona (1993), lion references are used extensively in African culture to imply royal power, vigour, and strength. Lions also symbolise good vs evil and occupy a special place in traditional African spiritual beliefs (Olupona, 1993). The Cameroonian team, for example, is nicknamed 'Les Lions Indomptables' meaning 'The Indomitable Lions'. Morocco's team combines the national animal lion reference with a geographical locale, i.e., the Atlas Lions. Senegal's team is nicknamed the Lions of Teranga which combines the national animal with the custom of hospitality. The word 'Teranga' suggests hospitality or welcoming generosity, and originates from the Wolof language, the most widely spoken language in Senegal. Aside from African countries, Iran and England both use lion references in their nicknames. Iran also combines the lion reference with a nod to its history in the Persian lions.

Lions in Iranian literature and traditions are linked with power and royalty (Behrens-Abouseif, 1997). England's team also makes links to history in their 'Three Lions' nickname. The English three lions, which feature on the logo of the Football Association of England, have historical significance in British heraldry. The three lions historically date back to the 12th century when a red crest with three gold lions was carried into battle to inspire English troops (Vincent et al., 2010).

The second most used animal reference is 'eagle' which is used in three national teams, namely Serbia, Poland, and Tunisia. The Serbian team is called 'Orlovi' meaning 'the Eagles', in reference to the national symbol of the country, the double-headed white Serbian eagle (Bancroft, 2020). Similarly, Poland's team nickname, i.e., 'Orły', which means 'Eagles', takes after the Polish coat of arms which showcases a white-tailed eagle on a red shield. Unlike Serbia and Poland, Tunisia combines the symbol of the eagle from the Tunisian football federation logo with a historically significant reference to the empire of Carthage. Carthage extended beyond the Northwest Africa coast and encompassed major parts of coastal Iberia and the western Medi-

terranean Sea islands (Brown et al., 2017). Other combination nicknames include the Saudi Green Falcons. Falcons have a long history in the Arabian Peninsula, and evidence of their existence can be traced back to the Neolithic Al-Magar civilisation and remain an integral part of Saudi traditions and culture (Bildstein & Therrien, 2018). The final bird reference is the Brazilian team's 'Canarinho' meaning 'Little Canary', which is based on a distinctive species of bird which is very popular in Brazil and is vividly yellow in colour (Feng et al., 2020).

The last two team nicknames with animal references include Wales and Australia. The Welsh team is nicknamed 'Y Dreigiau' meaning 'The Dragons' in reference to Wales' national animal. The Welsh dragon has a long history and is thought that it was first adopted in the early fifth century. The Australian team's nickname, 'The Socceroos', is closely associated with an animal reference, and is a blending of 'soccer' and 'kangaroo'. The kangaroo is significant in the culture and belief system of the Aboriginal people of Australia, as well as the national identity of Australia (Draper, 2015). Table 6 lists the team nicknames with animal-based references.

Table 6
Teams' nicknames with animal-based references

| No. | TEAM | NICKNAME |
|-----|--------------|---|
| 1. | Cameroon | Les Lions Indomptables (The Indomitable Lions) |
| 2. | Senegal | The Lions of Teranga (The Lions of Hospitality) |
| 3. | Morocco | The Atlas Lions |
| 4. | Tunisia | The Eagles of Carthage |
| 5. | Serbia | Orlovi (The Eagles) |
| 6. | Poland | Orły (The Eagles) |
| 7. | Wales | Y Dreigiau (The Dragons) |
| 8. | England | The Three Lions |
| 9. | Brazil | Canarinho (Little Canary) |
| 10. | Saudi Arabia | The Green Falcons |
| 11. | Iran | The Persian Lions |
| 12. | Australia | The Socceroos |

4.2.3. Metaphor-based reference

This category includes 4 team nicknames. These nicknames are analysed according to the conceptual metaphor theory developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). The theory indicates that metaphor is a cognitive process in which one domain called the source is partially mapped onto a different domain called the target, which is constructed and perceived based on the source do-

main. With reference to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), the source domain (nickname) is mapped systematically to the target domain (public's experience). These metaphor-based nicknames involve several source domains, namely, war, persistence, and exploration, which are more concrete in the public's experience. Therefore, speakers can understand the specific feature of the abstract source domain, nickname. Metaphorical language used

by people does not only provide us with information about geography, lifestyle, beliefs, religion, culture, and society, but also it is a linguistic strategy portraying a certain context in which people are communicating (Crespo-Fernández, 2013) and may evoke different types of emotions (Kövecses, 2000). This was also evidenced by the emotions the Jordanian respondents highlighted when using their teams' nicknames, and in their preference for nicknames with metaphorical reference (see Table 2). Indeed, although this group contains only four team nicknames, other nicknames can be considered from a metaphorical point of view. The decision not to include more was necessary to minimise repetition, present salient examples of each group and facilitate detailed discussion of all nicknames. Future studies may focus on the construction of nicknames from a metaphorical angle.

Koller (2004) argues that metaphor is introduced in football teams' nicknames to refer to the teams themselves or their players. Accordingly, the football competition is a war between two rivals on the battle-field, i.e., stadium, where each team wears different colours to distinguish their armies as well as special crests to refer to strength, masculinity, and power. Japan's team is nicknamed the Samurai Blue which signals the historical significance of the Samurai culture, heritage, and folklore (Awad, 2012). The nickname combines the Japanese word 'Samurai', meaning 'ancient warriors', with the colour of Japan's national team shirts, blue. This nickname has been widely used throughout Japanese media and around the world, and has connotations of battling with pride, a sense of fair play, and a strong desire for victory (Mandujano, 2014). Even though a large part of the nickname is related to a war metaphor, the blue flag is also significant. In the build-up to the World Cup, blue flags are distributed to fans at matches and events all over the country, and buses are wrapped in blue to show support for the Japanese team. People nationwide wear something blue on match days to spread the 'Samurai Blue' spirit. Similarly, the South Korean team is called 'The Taegeuk Warriors', where Taegeuk is the symbol on the South Korean flag representing spiritual balance in Korean culture (Awad, 2012; Feng et al., 2020). According to the conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), the football match is a war in which the Japanese and South Korean players are assumed to be warriors aiming to win a battle.

The Portuguese team is nicknamed as 'Os Navegadores', meaning 'The Navigators'. This nickname refers to the rich Portuguese history in navigation and exploration (Silva, 2018). The concept of navigation consists of several elements, including captains, navigators, sailors, ships, waves, currents, and destinations (Pasaribu, 2016, p. 102). The navigators seek to discover something new or reach their destination. Based on the conceptual metaphor by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), one domain, i.e., nickname, can be understood in terms of a very different domain of experience, i.e., navigation. This metaphor-based nickname shows that as navigators sail against waves to find the best route to their destination, Portuguese players in a match with the opposing team seek to score goals. The team's coach or leader, similar to the captain of the ship who sails together with his crew in order to reach their destination, directs his players in order to win the match or championship. This navigation-based metaphor seems powerful because it is in line with the history of the Portuguese people's navigation history (Pasaribu, 2016).

The Belgian team's nickname 'Rode Duivels' meaning 'Red Devils' combines both metaphor and colour-based references, inspired by their jersey colour. Historically, Belgium and the Netherlands national teams have played each other on a biannual basis since 1905. This match has been known as the Low Countries Derby. After one of these matches, a Dutch reporter indicated that the Belgian players 'worked as devils', hence the nickname (Delwit et al., 2022). This metaphor-based nickname may suggest pejorative or offensive connotations, particularly for child fans, but these negative associations are somewhat ameliorated (Feng et al., 2020). With reference to the conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), winning the football match or championship is a very difficult task, but the Belgian players with the spirit of the great power are assumed to be spiritual creatures, as devils, working relentlessly to score goals. It is concluded that the metaphor-based nicknames conceptualise the abstract domain, i.e., football match, onto something related to human experience, i.e., war, navigation, or persistence. Accordingly, the players are assumed to be warriors, sailors, or devils. Also, the employment of metaphors in football nicknaming is an influential technique to convey the winning spirit and the sense of fair play for the team as well as the public. Table 7 illustrates the team nicknames involving metaphor-based references.

Table 7
Teams' nicknames with metaphor-based references

| No. | TEAM | NICKNAME |
|-----|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. | Japan | Samurai Blues |
| 2. | South Republic of Korea | Taegeuk Warriors |
| 3. | Portugal | Os Navegadores (The Navigators) |
| 7. | Belgium | Rode Duivels (The Red Devils) |

4.2.4. Culture-related references

This group lists four nicknames related to distinctive cultural elements, namely, dance, song, and native language. A preference for nicknames with artistic references emerged in the survey responses, where 10.2% of the Jordanian respondents stated that they find this type of nickname more impressive. This might be associated with two famous national football teams in the international tournament, Brazil, and Argentina, which both have nicknames related to their traditional dances; ‘Samba’ and ‘Tango’ respectively. These nicknames suggest that players have a style of playing relating football and Tango or Samba dancing in order to triumph (Dyck & Archetti, 2003). This combination between football and dancing offers an insightful glance into understanding society, economy, politics, and culture’s more complex nature which is integral to the development of Brazil’s and Argentina’s national identity (Nielsen & Mariotto, 2005). Ethnonyms play a crucial role in nicknaming football teams, where some teams receive their nicknames after the name of people

living in that country. For example, Costa Rica’s team is called ‘Los Ticos’ meaning ‘The Inhabitants of Costa Rica’, which is used to refer to the native Costa Ricans. The suffix *tico* is typically used to show affection (Zvereva & Chilingaryan, 2016). The Croatian team nickname ‘Vatreni’ is another example. This nickname, which means ‘The Fiery Boys’ or ‘The Blazers’, draws on a song dedicated to the team titled ‘11 Vatrenih’ that celebrates the players and their fans’ passion. This nickname is a part of the whole metonymy, in which the Fiery boys’ or ‘the Blazers is substituted by speakers in sports discourse instead of the phrase ‘Croatian national football team’ representing the Republic of Croatia (Kišiček & Žagar, 2013). Based on the socio-onomastic analysis of culture-based nicknames, it is observed that football is not merely a sport, but it is also a reflection of the national identity of people and countries representing a space of cultural, historical, and social elements.

Table 8 below presents teams’ nicknames with culture-based references.

Table 8
Teams’ nicknames with culture-based reference

| No. | TEAM | NICKNAME |
|-----|------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. | Argentina | Tango |
| 2. | Brazil | Samba |
| 3. | Costa Rica | Los Ticos (The Ticos) |
| 4. | Croatia | Vatreni (Fiery boys or The Blazers) |

4.2.5. National team title references

The final category has four nicknames with a direct reference to the word ‘national’ in the construction of the nickname. For instance, the German football team has two nicknames, both in relation to the national team title. The first is ‘Nationalelf’ meaning ‘The National Eleven’, and the second is ‘Die Mannschaft’ meaning ‘The Team’ (Feng et al., 2020). The Brazilian team is globally known as ‘Selecao’, meaning ‘The Selected Players’. The Iranian team’s most popular nickname is ‘Team

Melli’ which means ‘The National Team’ (Awad, 2012). Similarly, Switzerland’s nickname is abbreviated to ‘Nati’ meaning ‘The National team’. Zvereva and Chilingaryan (2016) argue that the use of abbreviations based on the country’s name is commonly found in football teams’ nicknames. It is noted that this type of nickname is used to heighten national identity and solidarity and showcase the strength of the teams’ abilities.

Table 9 below reveals teams’ nicknames with national team title reference.

Table 9
Teams’ nicknames with national team title references

| No. | TEAM | NICKNAME |
|-----|-------------|--|
| 1. | Iran | Team Melli (The National Team) |
| 2. | Germany | Nationalelf (National Eleven), Die Mannschaft (The Team) |
| 3. | Switzerland | Nati (National Team) |
| 7. | Brazil | The Selecao (The Team/selected players) |

5. CONCLUSION

The use of nicknames in football continues to receive increased scholarly interest due to the universal appeal of football across countries and cultures. Firstly, this study sought to investigate the Jordanian youth attitudes towards the 22nd World Cup football teams' nicknames. The results indicate that Jordanian respondents follow their favourite teams not due to shared ethnicity or region, but rather sporting performance and player abilities. Over two-thirds of the respondents are aware of their favourite team's nickname and its meaning and origin. In spite of this, Jordanian youth tend to use the official name of their favourite team. Finally, almost half of the respondents believe that teams' nicknames with national references are the most impressive. Secondly, the present study aimed to offer and analyse a socio-onomastic classification of the 22nd World Cup football teams' nicknames. The data analysis suggests that the 22nd World Cup football teams' nicknames can be categorised into five groups, namely the ones bearing a flag-, animal-, metaphor-, culture-, and national title reference. From a socio-onomastic perspective, this study has found that football nicknames are complex in nature, and represent national, animal, metaphorical, and cultural elements. These elements are closely linked with the national identity of the countries that these teams represent. Teams' nicknames may be influenced by the country's nature. For example, most of the African countries tend to adopt animal-based references, and similarly, the majority of European countries rely on colour-based references for their nicknames.

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