

# Influence of Gender on Sociolinguistic Attitudes as Reflected in Animal Metaphors

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ملخص:

تتناول هذه الدراسة تحليل استخدام الذكور والإناث على منصة تويتر استعارة أسماء الحيوانات ومدلولات ذلك الاستخدام ارتباطاً بجنس المتحدث والمستمع من وجهة نظر نظرية الاستعارة الفكرية. صنف الباحث بيانات تويتر إلى أربعة أصناف استناداً على جنس المتحدث والمستمع. ووجد الباحث أن اسمي القرد والخنزير أقل الأسماء استخداماً من الإناث والذكور كما لم يستخدم اسم الخنزير للإشارة إلى الإناث. وحيث أن البيئة الطبيعية للمملكة العربية السعودية ليست بيئة للقردة والخنزير فقد يكون ذلك سبباً في ندرة استخدام هذين الاسمين بشكل عام في بيانات الدراسة. ولعل سبب عدم استخدام اسمي القرد والخنزير للإشارة إلى الإناث في بيانات الدراسة هو أنهما مرتبطان بصفات القبح والرذيلة ويعد ذلك استخداماً يمجته المجتمع السعودي.

## Abstract

This study investigates how tweeters of different genders use animal metaphors in reference to others, and what this indicates about gender related attitudes. The focal framework utilized Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). Searches for tweets included targeting soccer club names and animal names conducting a basic Twitter search at: <https://Twitter.com/search-home>. The 938 tweets that resulted were categorized into four groups according to the gender of the addresser and addressee, i.e. f/f, f/m, m/f, m/m<sup>1</sup>. The tweets that resulted revealed patterns that were associated with the gender addresser/addressee categories. Females posted 90 *dog*, 35 *donkey*, 1 *monkey*, and 4 *pig* metaphors. Males posted 354 *dog*, 405 *donkey*, 23 *monkey*, and 17 *pig* metaphors. The *pig* and *monkey* metaphors were found to be the least frequently posted by either females or males. Tweeters did not use the animal metaphor *pig* in reference to females. It is probable that the metaphors *monkey* and *pig* were not posted as frequently as *dog* and *donkey* due to context, as Saudi Arabia is not the natural habitat of *monkeys* or *pigs*. Moreover, females were never name-called using the metaphors *monkey* and *pig*, as these terms suggest ugliness and impure sexuality, respectively. The etiquettes, and netiquettes, of communication within the Saudi speech community occlude references to such traits with regard to females. On their part, females posted very few tweets using the terms *monkey* and *pig* to address males, and only to express strong reproach when the males had broken netiquettes or engaged in wrongdoing.

**Key words:** vowel epenthesis; Classical Arabic; Arabic dialects; phonotactic constraints

<sup>1</sup>m=male; f=female

# 1 Introduction

To ensure acceptance within a society, it is important to be attentive to one another's feelings. Consideration for others' feelings is a feature of female linguistic style observed in a number of previous studies (e.g. Holmes, 1998; Tannen, 1994). Notably, use of an insult where it is true does not reveal level of consideration, or lack thereof for another's feelings. Insults are typically used when an individual does not live up to the expectations of the 'ideal women' or the 'ideal man' (James, 1998). Labelling someone in this way, implying they are less than ideal, is inconsiderate and offensive. People use different means to structure prescriptive expressions to denote ideal identity. One of these mechanisms is to draw on the hierarchical structure of 'the Great Chain of Being' metaphor, which places humans above animals. Based on this, it can be concluded that giving a human the epithet of an animal name is intentionally degrading.

The current study investigates whether the use of animal metaphors in name-calling is associated with gender differences. To determine this, the search domain used is 'Twitter'. For specificity, the animal metaphors the current study considered were *dog*, *donkey*, *monkey*, and *pig*. These four animal names were identified as the most common insults used in Saudi society, the context of the current study. The animal names were searched for from among the expressions of fans of four of the most famous soccer clubs in Saudi Arabia. Limiting the search to soccer fans limited the age range of participants. The study hypothesis was that females use animal name-calling less than males, as a result of females being more attentive to the feelings of others than males, and that males use these type of insults when addressing both females and other males.

As people transition from linguistic communication in conventional society to cyber-society, they adapt to the norms of that medium, modifying their communication styles accordingly. Therefore, it is important to identify the concept of 'netiquette' in the cyber domain, as a parallel to 'etiquette' in conventional society. Netiquette was introduced at the beginning of the 1980s, providing rules and guidelines to control the style that people adopt to communicate in cyber society. Communication norms online are expected to differ from those in conventional society. One of the reasons for the differences in speech styles in these two different domains, is that internet users can conceal their identities by choosing to remain anonymous, or mask their identity by using identities that are different from their real ones (Danet, 1998). Such masks can include the adoption of a different gender in the virtual world (Palomares and Lee, 2010). Different gender claims can be affected by the genres and contexts available in hyperspace, as gender presentation interacts variously with the virtual worlds online (Herring, 2000). It is thought to be relatively common that members of the non-dominant gender will adapt their style to that of the dominant gender (Herring, 1994). However, certain clues can reveal users' true gender, such as accounts' pictures and names, reference to oneself using gender markers, as evident when collecting the data. The abundance of different gender markers in Arabic (the language the current study considers), which must be attached to words of different parts of speech, assisted the researcher with labelling the results based on gender.

Returning to netiquette, one of the rules of netiquette is to refrain from insulting or offending others. Interestingly, Herring (1994) found that women take into consideration "the face needs of the addressee", whereas men adopt a face threatening style when engaging in cyberspace communication. In addition, Al-Shlool (2016) argues that women tend to be more polite when using social media than men are. Thus, insulting and calling people names online is relatively taboo for females but not for males when roaming the cyberspace. However, insults can also be used as a form of intimacy and to establish solidarity between language users (Culpeper, 1996).

To understand the various interpretations of insults more clearly, speech acts need to be considered. A speech act can be classified at three levels: the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary levels.

According to Austin (1962), the locutionary aspect of the act concerns the effect of the utterance, the illocutionary act the intent of the speaker, and the perlocutionary act the effect on the listener. When speech acts are connected to insults, these are thought of as part of the locutionary act. However, in order for an insult to convey its offensive message, it needs to be an illocutionary act, i.e. reflecting the addresser's intention. Moreover, the insult must be perceived by the addressee to be effective as a perlocutionary act (Babou-Sekkal, 2012). In other words, when the illocutionary aspect of the act is missing, then the insult produced is characterized as a humorous expression. It is important in the case of deliberate humorous intent that the insults be interpreted as untrue to avoid miscommunication. That is, if an expression seems insulting and is taken as such in the absence of illocutionary weight, then the listener may be offended as a result of failure to perceive the underlying humorous function of the expression. When an insult includes a metaphoric component, this adds a further level of complexity to an already complex structure, impeding the ease of interpretation of the illocutionary act.

To better understand what metaphors are, it is vital to know first that the concepts we hold in our minds structure our realities (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). It is crucial to know that metaphors are conventional and pervasive in everyday language (Reddy, 1979). This means that understanding conventional metaphors automatically, unconsciously and effortlessly, is an ongoing process, as language speakers use language naturally. This process involves cross-domain mapping between a source and a target domain to process and understand language use instantaneously (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Mapping one domain onto another requires a means for mapping, a 'conduit', or a metaphoric vehicle.

## 2 Theoretical Frame

Metaphors work in an interesting way. The linguistic elements used metaphorically, when interpreted literally, do not match the referents to which they refer, which in and of itself is an important feature of the metaphoric design. To achieve a better understanding of how metaphors work, it is vital to recognize that metaphors serve as a vehicle with which to deliver the semantic/pragmatic content of the linguistic expression. This delivery is parallel to the conceptual projection of the semantic feature(s) from the target domain to the source domain.

As intelligent beings, we use metaphors in our everyday language in different forms and shapes. Metaphors do not only serve a poetic purpose, nevertheless, they are mainly used to enhance understanding of concepts. A main purpose of using a metaphor can be to make an abstract target-domain entity less abstract by borrowing features from a source-domain entity that is concrete or at least less abstract than the target entity (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Those borrowed features are projected into the target domain entity to highlight and present features that would not be as readily understood otherwise. Such projection results in an entity that's more concretized or less abstract (Fauconnier and Turner, 1998). This entity has also been called the 'hybrid creature' which indicates how features of different domains are working together to conceptually produce the entity (Langacker, 2008). Both frameworks, the Conceptual Metaphor and the Conceptual Blending stress that metaphors are used routinely and constantly.

A metaphor must hold the same cultural relevance in both the source and target domains for the mapping to be successful. This means that if the vehicle is misunderstood or deemed illogical by a given society, then the entire metaphor would be judged to 'not fit' into the grammar of that society. Such linguistic elements, or vehicles, can take different forms. To illustrate this, using a source that differs from the data at hand, is the use of simile in the poetic verse by Ali Bin Aljahm (Murad, 1980). During the 9th century, Aljahm used this verse to address the caliph of that time. This verse is translated literally as "You are like a *dog* in keeping affability, and a *male-goat* when facing hardships". Notice that in this verse the words *dog* and *goat* are both used to refer to the person of high status in that

state, the caliph. The anecdote states that Aljahm came from a place far away from the caliph's city to visit the caliph. This suggests that the cultural values he associated with the animal names used may have been different. As a result of the locutionary and perlocutionary acts being understood, but the illocutionary act being misunderstood, the court became angry at Aljahm for seemingly insulting their caliph. This is an example of a case of a mismatch in the appropriateness of the source domains of Aljahm's society and the Caliph's society. For Aljahm, the similes should have been automatically understood as he intended, and he would not have known there was potential for offence, which is probably why he did not attempt to clarify the misunderstanding<sup>2</sup>.

If a metaphor is not automatically understood due to its recent introduction to a society, with frequency of use it will eventually become so. Misunderstandings, such as that described above are not expected to be common in the data set, as the three speech acts, locutionary, perlocutionary, and illocutionary are anticipated to function well, since the tweeters are expected to be familiar with the norms and netiquettes at work in the cyber domain. Automatic metaphors are referred to in the literature as *conceptual metaphors* or *dead metaphors*. Such metaphors are termed "conceptual" on the grounds that they are processed deep in the mind, without conscious processing. Thus, they are 'dead' because they are figuratively dead to the consciousness of language users. Such metaphors are used as part of conventional everyday language having been subject to repetitive use over a long period of time (Lakoff, 1987, 1993; Lakoff and Turner, 1989).

**Diagram 1**

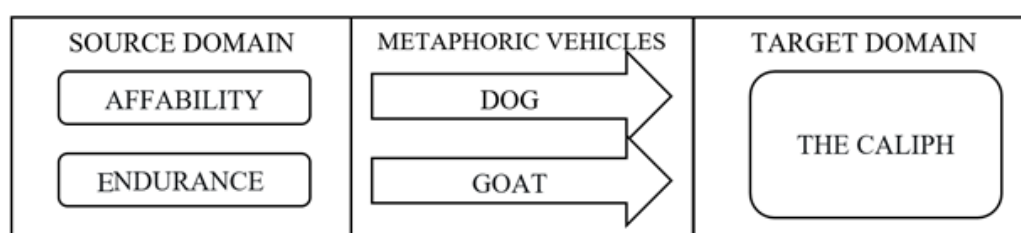
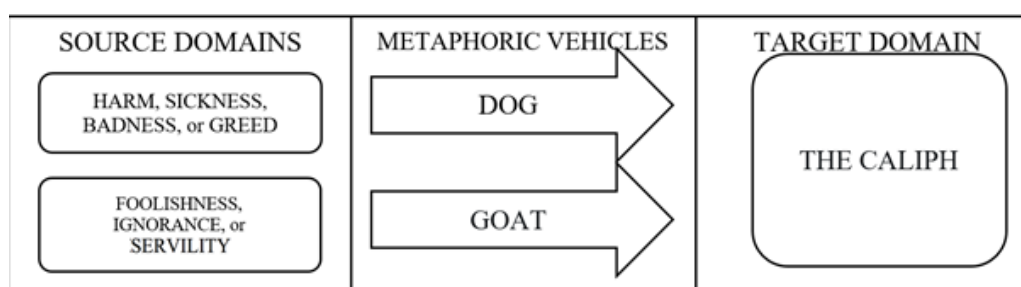


Diagram (1) demonstrates the domains and vehicles used by Aljahm in the form of poetic verse. Notice that the vehicles in diagram (1) are valid in the grammar of Aljahm's society<sup>3</sup>, and so he thought they would be valid in the caliph's society. In contrast to these positive meanings of the metaphors, *dog* and *goat*, the words mainly connote negative meanings in Standard Arabic, which is more akin to the variety used in the caliph's society. The negative meanings include *harmful*, *sick*, *bad*, and *greedy* for 'dog' and *fool*, *ignorant*, and *servile* for 'goat' according to the Alma'ani Aljami' dictionary. For those metaphorical meanings in the caliph's society, the metaphors would be processed differently, as in diagram (2).

**Diagram 2**



When comparing diagram (1) with diagram (2), it is apparent that the only change in the metaphoric elements parts arises the source domain, since the target, 'the caliph' and the metaphoric vehicles 'dog

<sup>2</sup>There may be other reasons associated with Aljahm's personality-attitude.

<sup>3</sup>Aljahm's society is a Bedouin-Arabian society as opposed to the caliph's urban society.

and *goat*' are the same. Aljahm originated from a nomadic society and the caliph from an urban one, suggesting a mismatch of source domains as well as attitudes towards the qualities of animals.

### 3 Literature Review

A decade after the introduction of Lakoff and Johnson's views with regard to metaphors, researchers began to examine the issue of use and application of metaphor relative to gender. Of these studies, some have focused on establishing the semantic and pragmatic meanings associated with animal metaphors. The majority were conducted by surveying for information, or by analysing lists of metaphors and their meanings. For example, in a study by Xiao-hui (2010), the animal metaphors connecting people to sheep, snakes, and tigers were found to be mainly used to support discrimination against people on the grounds of gender. In terms of gender styles of using metaphors, childbirth vs work tools metaphors were found to be implemented regardless of the gender of the language user. This implementation resulted from enhancing traits as power, strength and leadership when implementing a male style or objectiveness and persuasiveness when implementing a female style (Zeng, Tay, and Ahrens, 2020). When the gender of the interlocutors was the same, metaphoric framing was enhanced (Flusberg et al., 2020).

In two separate studies, Fontecha and Catalán (2003) and Sun and Hsieh (2009) determined that the metaphorical meaning of animal metaphors when applied to females was implicitly more degrading than when addressed to a male. Rodriguez (2009) argues that use of animal metaphors when addressing women can connote domesticity and promiscuity, further indicating their inferiority and subordination to men. Winter, Duffy, and Littlemore (2020) considered gender influence on the association between vertical metaphor and power in the metaphor POWER IS UP. They determined that participants responded faster when men were associated with up. This finding was even more evident when the participants were males. This finding is similar to that reported by Fontecha and Catalán (2003) and Sun and Hsieh (2009) according to which UP and DOWN indicate superiority and inferiority, respectively. Moreover, James (1998) argues that although female derogatory terms when used to refer to males are considered more positive than when used to refer to females, there are some shifts toward gender-neutral usage of some terms, influenced by female resistance to the gender discriminatory use of metaphors.

In addition, when considering metaphor content and context of use, Haslam, Loughnan, and Sun (2011) found that the gender of the addressee affected the offensiveness of an animal metaphor. For example, female participants found the animal name *pig* more offensive than the male participants did, and male participants found *rat* more offensive than female participants when referred to another male as 'a rat'. Haslam, Loughnan, and Sun (2011)'s work encouraged consideration that other factors may be influential here. Animal metaphors were also found to be used to formulate gender identities. These gender identities are established by male members of the society and then adopted by both males and females (Nadežda, 2014).

### 4 Methodology

The current study uses, as its source data, tweets by fans of the four of the most famous Saudi soccer clubs, *Itihad*, *Hilal*, *Ahli*, and *Nasr*. The search box on the webpage, 'https://Twitter.com/search-home' was used to search for keyword combinations including soccer club fan reference markers (to indicate the club) and animal names. The morphological combination in Arabic works when using a soccer club name such as *Itihad* and *Hilal* and attaching the suffix indicating belonging –i to produce the fan reference words *itihadi*, and *hilali*. These clubs were selected to control the area of the speech community to only include the Saudi community. Common degrading animal names, namely:



*dog*, *monkey*, *donkey*, and *pig*, were included in the keyword combination. A vocative case particle [ya], equivalent to the vocative 'O' in English, was attached to the beginning of each of these animal names to ensure they were being used for the specific purpose of name-calling. An additional gender marker, *-ah*, was added to the fan reference and animal names, when indicating a female reference, to distinguish between instances of use to address males and females. This alternates with the male reference marker, which is a zero-mark. For example, *itihadi* and *hilali* are used to refer to males, while *itihadiah* and *hilalah* refer to females. The searched tweets are listed chronologically.

The data was collected from the most recent 100 tweets<sup>4</sup> for each animal name keyword, with each of the club fans' keywords, resulting in 32 groups; the number of names multiplied by the number of clubs multiplied by 2 for female/male differences. Ideally, this would result in 3200 as the grand total number of tweets collected. However, for some particular searches, the total number of resulting tweets was much lower, resulting in a total number of tweets collected of 938. The data collected was further arranged by female or male posters based on the self-identified names of the tweeter account, account picture, and/or the 1st person marker in the content of the tweets when expressions were not reported. Next, the tweets were grouped into four gender categories including, female to female (f/f), female to male (f/m), male to female (m/f), and male to male (m/m). When the gender identity of the poster was unclear<sup>5</sup>, the data collected was excluded from further analysis. A following analysis of gender attitudes was conducted by considering the content and context of the message in which the animal names were used. This was done to uncover whether ideologies regarding gender differences were manifested by using the animal metaphors to indicate sexism. Then, the speech act of name calling was considered to establish whether the tweet was posted as a friendly humorous or serious insult.

It was predicted that males tweeted more than females, since soccer club fans in Saudi Arabia are more likely to be males than females. When there were female tweets, it was hypothesized that the purpose of communication was less fanatic as opposed to male tweets, as a result of the general trend for supporting soccer clubs in Saudi Arabia being masculine. In addition, when the name-calling target was a female, the purpose of communication was expected to differ from the purpose of communication when targeting males. Aggressive and pugilist humour was not expected to be present for all gender sources and targets. This is due to fans' sincerity ranging from very fanatic, to less fanatic. It is expected that some animal names would appear more frequently in the data than others. This expectation was based on how choice of language reflects the surrounding environment; for example, pigs are non-existent in Saudi Arabia.

Collecting tweets by performing the 32 searches resulted in a total of 938 tweets. Searching for tweets by animal names, together with soccer club names resulted in around 100 tweets in total for the animal names *dog* and *donkey*, see table (1). For the animal names *monkey* and *pig*, however, the total number of tweets ranged from three to ten. When a search result reaches one hundred tweets, this means there may have been more than one hundred tweets, since the study focused on collating the most recent 100 tweets, and not including those beyond 100. The total number of results for each keyword combination can exceed more than one hundred when there are several locations to which the feminine marker can be added, e.g. the animal name and the club fan reference. In this case, the numbers of results were added to the one hundred tweets. This resulted in a small number of tweets compared to the number of tweets in which both the addresser and addressee were males. These additional searches meant it was important to include all the tweets made by females. The reason the number of tweets from m/m is below one hundred is that some tweets that were supposed to result from the m/m search were actually found to have been made by females, or addressed to females, upon examination.

<sup>4</sup>The total number of tweets per search can be much lower than 100.

<sup>5</sup>Not clear gender identity of poster constituted less than 1% of the whole data. The 938 tweets exclude the tweets of unclear identity.

## 5 Results and Discussion

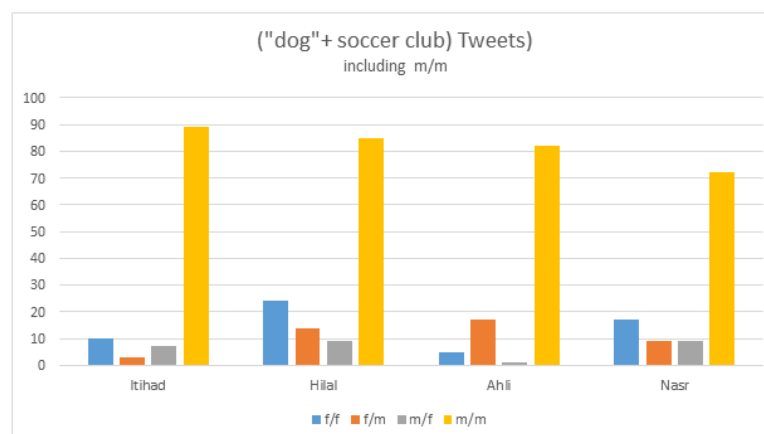
When searching for the tweets for *Ahli+donkey*, ensuring the tweets were all from Saudi Arabia would have taken a very long time. This is because there is a soccer club that goes by the name ‘Ahli’ in Egypt. What would have made this even more difficult was that the animal name ‘donkey’ is much more common in the Egyptian variety of Arabic. The association of the ‘donkey’ metaphor with Egyptian Arabic rendered the tweets including *Ahli+donkey* irrelevant to this current study. In addition, when specifying country of search, using the advanced search option, the results did not account for the expectation of this keyword combination. This could be due to the type of website filters that were active when the advanced search was performed, or it may be that the tweets were not linked directly or efficiently to the place of origin. For this reason, the space for *Ahli+donkey* in the respective tables below is blank. However, since the data for the other soccer clubs was broadly similar, those results can be considered roughly generalizable to the situation with regard to name calling in Saudi Arabia in general.

**Table 1**

	<u>Itihad</u>					<u>Hilal</u>					<u>Ahli</u>					<u>Nasr</u>					Grand-T
	ff	fm	mf	mm	T	ff	fm	mf	mm	T	ff	fm	mf	mm	T	ff	fm	mf	mm	T	
<i>Dog</i>	10	3	7	89	109	24	14	9	85	132	5	17	1	82	105	17	9	9	72	107	453
<i>Donkey</i>	7	0	9	87	103	15	0	14	10	129	2	0	1	99	102	10	1	8	87	106	440
<i>Monkey</i>	0	0	2	6	8	0	0	1	8	9	N/A					0	1	0	6	7	24
<i>pig</i>	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	8	10	0	1	0	2	3	0	0	0	7	7	21
																					938

A total of 453 tweets resulted from searching for the keyword combination ”dog”+ soccer club. The total number of tweets including the fan reference *Hilal* and the animal name dog was 132, being the highest in results among the fan reference + dog combination. The *Itihad* + *dog* keyword combination resulted in 109 tweets, followed by Naser + dog and *Ahli* + *dog* combinations, resulting in 107 and 105 tweets respectively. Chart (1) shows the number of tweets including the metaphor dog, and chart (2) is a modified version of chart (1), which includes only the results that have females as either or both addressers and/or addressees.

**Chart 1**

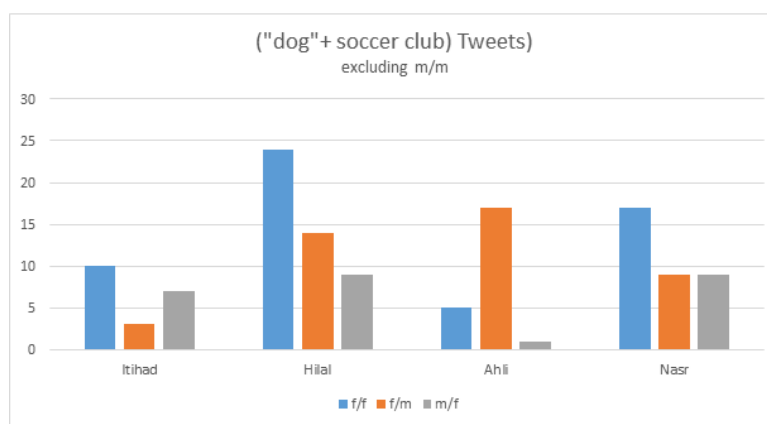


The m/m gender category reveals a very large difference in the number of tweets relative to the other

gender categories. This reflects the category of soccer club fans as being male dominated in Saudi Arabia.

Excluding the m/m gender category from the chart, as in chart (2), makes it more convenient to compare the results for the other gender categories, f/f, f/m, and m/f.

**Chart 2**



Tweets including the animal name dog posted by females addressing females were rated highest with Hilal, then Nasr, Itihad, and Ahli, resulting in 24, 17, 10, and 5 tweets respectively. Tweets by females addressing males were the highest with Ahli, then Hilal, Nasr, and Itihad, resulting in 17, 14, 9, and 3 tweets respectively. Tweets by males addressing females were 9 with Hilal and Nasr, 7 with Itihad, and 1 with Ahli.

Tweets including the animal name *donkey* + *hilal* numbered 15 tweets posted by females addressing females, being the highest, with Hilal followed by 10 with nasr, 7 with itihad, and 2 with Ahli.

When females were addressing males, the results showed no existence of tweets with the exception of one tweet for Nasr. The total numbers of tweets involving males addressing females using the animal name donkey were, 14, 9, 8, and 1 respectively with Hilal, Itihad, Nasr, and Ahli.

Rare examples of females calling a human a donkey may be due to the ‘donkey’ epithet being associated with ugliness. Charts (3) and (4) demonstrate how the word donkey was used relative to the four soccer club names.

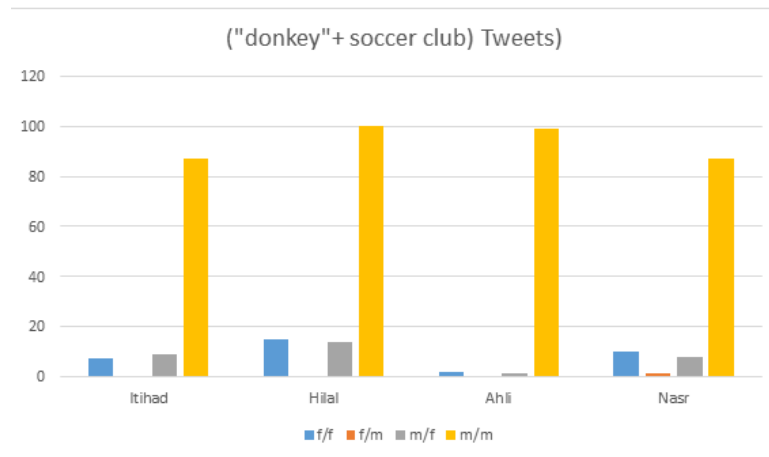
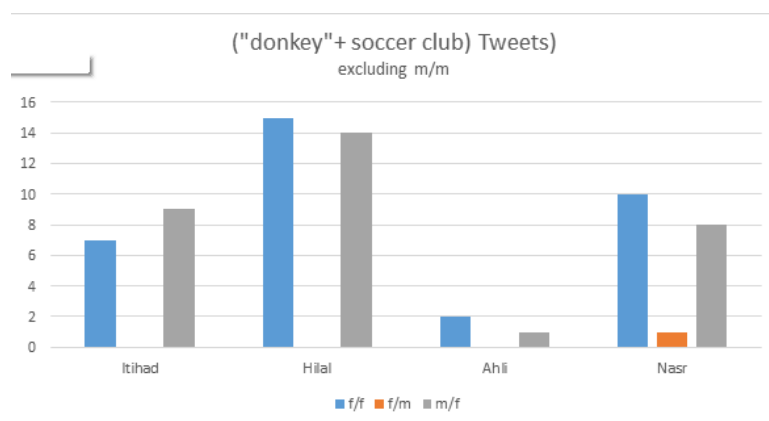
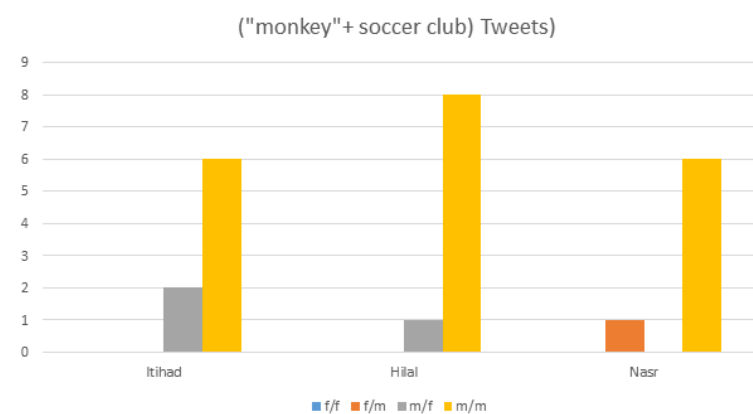
Chart (3) includes all the participant groups and chart (4) excludes the male addressing male group.

For the animal name monkey, when used together with the four soccer club names, the data showed females rarely used this expression (3 times). Females also rarely used the monkey + club fan name expression, with males doing so in only one tweet with the Nasr club fan reference. In addition, males do not typically use monkey when addressing females, with only two tweets with Itihad, one tweet with Hilal, and none with Nasr (chart (5)).

Males were found to use the animal name monkey to refer to males in 8 tweets with Hilal, 6 tweets with Itihad and 6 tweets with Nasr. Finding only a few examples of monkey + soccer club fan reference may be because monkeys do not usually inhabit the mainly-desert environment of Saudi Arabia and so their inclusion in the language is low.

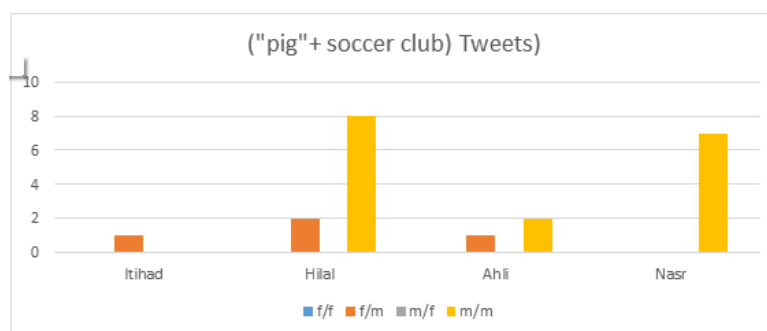
The word pig combined with a soccer club fan reference were found to be very rare. There were no tweets including the word pig combined with a soccer club fan reference when the tweets addressed females, whether they were posted by females or males. In addition, there were 2 tweets that included pig with Hilal, 1 tweet with Itihad, and 1 with Ahli when the tweets were posted by females addressing



**Chart 3****Chart 4****Chart 5**

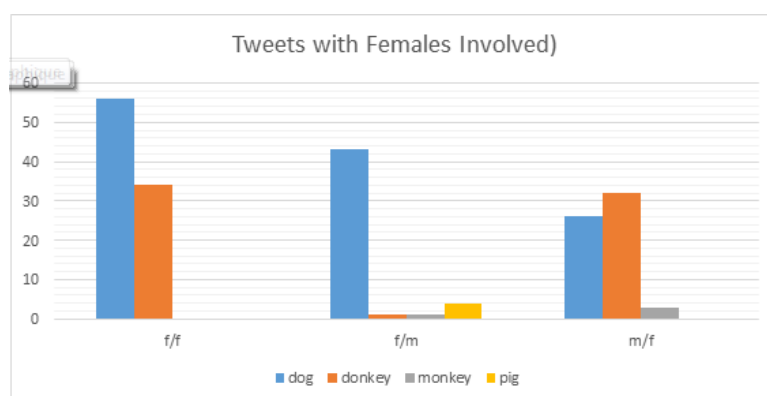
males. For tweets posted by males addressing males, 8 tweets included pig with Hilal, 7 with Nasr, and 2 with Ahli were found (chart (6)).

**Chart 6**



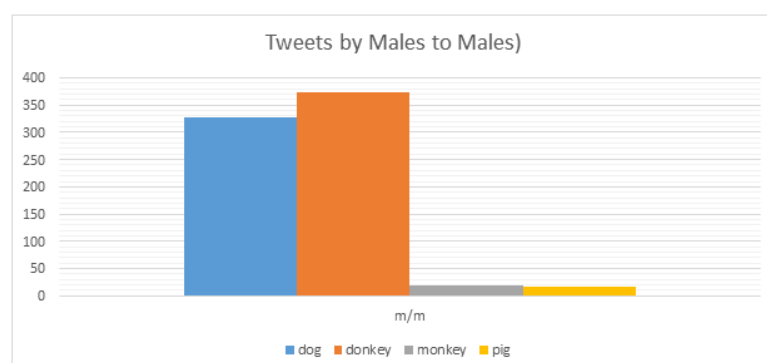
When comparing all the tweets that involved females as addressers, addressees, or both, it emerged that the word dog was generally the most commonly used. When the word dog was combined with a soccer club fan reference, 56 tweets were posted by females targeting females, 43 by females targeting males, and 26 by males targeting females. For the word donkey, 34 tweets were made by females addressing females, 32 tweets by males addressing females, and only one made by a female addressing a male (chart (7)).

**Chart 7**



When comparing the total number of tweets by males addressing other males, I discovered that the animal names dog and donkey were much more commonly used than the animal names monkey and pig (Chart (8)).

**Chart 8**



When comparing the total number of female tweets with the total number of male tweets, I found 139 tweets were made by females and 799 by males. This is despite the fact that the male tweets did not

include all male tweets, since only the most recent one hundred tweets were included. This would make the ratio of the presence of females to the presence of males in the Twitter domain when animals and soccer club fan references were combined 0.17:1. This is disregarding non-inclusion of all tweets posted by males.

The tweets associated with football clubs were mainly written in a non-standard linguistic style, i.e. not the usual Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)<sup>6</sup>. This finding may be a consequence of the age and educational background of the tweeters. Alternatively it could result from the language shift that occurs when switching from conventional speech to cyber speech. The Twitter community may affect feelings of solidarity, which influence positive attitudes toward the less preferred language varieties (Lefkowitz and Hedgcock, 2017), which is colloquial Arabic in this case. Some of the tweets referred to controversial social incidents, such as a hit and run and a child abuse incident. I found that the majority of the tweets condemned such actions using animal names for the wrongdoers. Interestingly, female tweeters were more active in such situations. An example of this was the hit and run incident, in which the injured person was a fan of the Itihad club. Following that incident, 11 tweets, 10 with dog and 1 with pig, condemned the act and likened the perpetrator to a dog, to censure them. Females were responsible for seven of these tweets. This means that females were much more active in expressing indignation following negative actions. This was especially interesting when considering the female tweets to male tweets ratio, according to the data at hand, which was 0.17:1. This may indicate that females used animal name-calling as a result of being more emotionally moved more than males in this case. Examples (1), (a) was posted by a female, and (b) by a male.

- (1) a    ʕasa        mabuh        kurah    wen        alʔinsanijah    yaħmar  
           I wish    exist-NEG    ball    where    DEF-humanity    VOC-donkey  
           “I wish    there        was    no soccer.    You are not    human O donkey”
- b    uqsim        bil:ah        an:as        ɖol        marDa        jimsakunək  
           Swear-1stSG    by-Allah    DEF-people    those        sick        3rdPL-catch-1stSG  
           jakalb        wuxal        at:aʕaS:ub    jinfəʕak  
           VOC-dog        and-let    DEF-fanaticism    benefit-2ndSG  
           “I swear that    those        people are sick.    How does        fanaticism    help you now.  
           O dog        I hope        that they’ll    catch you.”

In the case of the other controversial incident, a child was attacked because he was a fan of a certain soccer club. The reaction to this abuse was 30 tweets, 14 of them posted by females, which represents a far greater proportion than the general ratio of female tweets to male ones referred to above.

This may indicate further that being a part of a community of practice of soccer fans is more attractive for males than for females in Saudi Arabia. Condemnation of wrongdoing was undertaken by all soccer club fans regardless of the wrongdoer’s club affiliation. This reflects human nature in terms of disowning and rejecting wrongdoers, regardless of the affiliations we share with them.

Some tweets were used to attribute personality traits to certain targets, by assigning them animal names for the purpose of degradation, or to indicate ugliness, or sexuality. Some club fans used degradation to position their soccer club as a zone for insiders, and the subject of their attacks as outsiders, claiming themselves as members of a community of practice. This technique conveys the message: ‘you think you are fit to be fans of our club, as you claim to be, but your position is lower in the hierarchy of the Great Chain of Being<sup>7</sup>. In fact your status is with the animals in this hierarchy’. In such cases,

<sup>6</sup>Writing, from a traditional perspective, is expected to be in MSA even for personal correspondence or non-official purposes.

<sup>7</sup>The Great Chain of Being is a metaphorical hierarchy in which humans are placed above animals, who are in turn placed above plants.

the word dog was used most often. This recurred in several tweets by Hilal fans, in reference to Nasr fans, or Itihad fans calling Ahli fans. This situation showed how overt prestige played a role in this community of practice, Hilal and Itihad. On the other hand, it also shows how covert prestige, associated with Nasr and Ahli, plays such role. Consider examples (2) (a) and (b), which show overt prestige, and (c) showing covert prestige.

- (2) a. yaHmar int mant it:iHadi int ahlawi mendas  
 VOC-donkey you not itihadi you ahlawi in disguise  
 “O donkey, you are not itihadi. You are ahlawi in disguise”  
 b. uqsim bil:ah mant hilali wil:ixalaqni int fagrawi  
 1stSG-swear by-Allah not hilali by-my-creator you fagrawi  
 titlaz:ag fi am:ak jakalb  
 sticking in your-uncle VOC-dog  
 “I swear that you are not hilali by the one who created  
 me; you are fagrawi<sup>8</sup> (nasrawi) trying to get close to your boss O dog”  
 c. mant naSrawi jakalb  
 NEG-you nasrawi VOC-dog  
 “you are not nasrawi O dog”

Several of the tweets included emoji's. Emoji's function is to express emotions that are hard to express using only words. Using the emoji's non-verbal language conversely, improved the communication of emotions (Evans, 2017). Emojis used included thumbs-down, angry-face, broken heart, surprised-face, crying-face, and laughing-face, to name but a few. Some of the emoji's used in the tweets condemning the hit and run incident referred to above are illustrated in (3).

- (3) a. bijimsakunək jakalb  
 3rdPL-catch-1stSG VOC-dog  
 “they will catch you O dog 🙄.”  
 b. ai riJaDa ða Allah jilʕank jakalb  
 what sport this (may)Allah damn-3rdSG VOC-dog  
 “that is not sport... I hope you get damned O dog 💔.”

Other examples condemning the hitting of a child incident are given in (4).

- (4) a. zaʕl jadv tənʕisir jafimar  
 may 2ndSG-hand broken VOC-donkey  
 “may your hand be broken O donkey 🖐️.”  
 b. jad:k Allah jiʕʕalha biʕ:aləl jakalb  
 2ndSG-hand Allah make-it with-paralysation VOC-dog  
 “I hope your hand will get paralyzed O dog 🤕”

The total number of tweets found that included emojis was 123. Of these, female posts numbered 50, and male posts 73, with a ratio of 0.68:1 female posts to male posts. This means many more females used emoji's than males when considering the ratio for total numbers of all the tweets by females to all the tweets by males, 0.17:1.

Some instances of feminine markers were added to the animal names by males to enhance the effect of the insult when addressing other males. When this marker is intentionally used in this way, it gains weight from the fact that the feminine gender occupies a lower social status than males, and so using it adds an additional element of degradation, as in the examples under (5).

- (5) a. jahmara                      haði                      iS:ura                      ʔar:at:i                      fiha                      aw:al                      ʔamsahi:ha                      ʔamsahi:ha  
          VOC-donkey                      this                      picture                      tweeted                      in-it                      first                      delete-it                      delete-it  
          “O jenny, this is                      the same                      picture                      you                      tweeted                      with.                      Delete it,                      Delete it”
- b. jahmara                      ʔana                      hilali  
          VOC-jenny                      I                      hilali  
          “O jenny,                      I am                      hilali.”

In both examples in (5), the addressers and addressees were males who chose to produce gender disagreement when considering the literal meaning of the expressions. Another possible explanation for adding the feminine marker to refer to males is not directly gender related. Rather, the use of the feminine marker may have been to associate some club fans with a mythical creature that allegedly appears in the afternoon and looks like a donkey, and is called ‘humarat algaila’, meaning ‘the afternoon jenny’. Another reference can be made to ‘humarat Juha’, or ‘Juha’s jenny’, which is a donkey that belonged to a famous historical comedic figure. These two references can be used in their full forms, e.g. ‘humarat algaila’, or using the reference to the animal ‘donkey/jenny’, in which case the modifier would be implied from the structural and pragmatic context, as in the examples in (6). Although such references have feminine markers, use of the marker is not definitely a sexist one, since the expressions ‘humarat algaila’ or ‘humarat Juha’ may be being used as references to characters that happen to be females.

Another theory related to calling males using feminine-marked names involves the gender identity of Twitter account users, as some may be changed from female to male. This may happen as a gender identity construct (Nadežda 2013), or as merely changing the account user’s identity, as a real identity change following handing an account to someone of the opposite gender, or as virtually claiming the opposing gender identity. In addition, one of the tweets included a feminine marker to establish poetic rhythm in the tweet’s expression.

- (6) a. aSlan                      ʔint    muzar:ad                      zʕeqi                      madʕus                      ʕala  
          originally                      you    just                      screamer                      stepped-PASS                      on  
          wazhak                      msaw:i    ʔin:ak                      ʔit:ihadi                      ʔarfinik                      min  
          face                      make    you                      itihadi                      known                      from  
          rihatK                      jahmarat    juha  
          smell                      VOC-jenny-POSS    Juha  
          “You are                      just a zaʕiqi    got stepped                      on your face,                      a wannabe                      Itihadi.  
          We know                      you from    your smell                      O Juha’s                      jenny.”
- b. ʔiða                      ʕəfti    fagrawi                      katib                      mutSad:ir                      faʕlami  
          if                      see-2ndSGFEM    poor-person                      written                      leading                      know-IMP  
          man                      hwua    alkabi:r                      jahmarat                      algajiləh  
          who                      is    DEF-big                      VOC-jenny                      DEF-afternoon  
          “If you                      see a fagrawi    wrote                      ‘leading in                      championship’,                      know  
          who is                      better, O algaila    jenny.”

In (6), you can see how the two expressions, ‘humarat Juha’ and ‘humarat algaila’, were used in their full forms, as opposed to the examples in (5), in which they may potentially be used in their contracted forms. Whenever the content’s gender mismatches the account’s name and picture, a further analysis of the tweet was undertaken to establish the tweeter’s actual gender. If the gender remained unclear, the tweet was excluded from further consideration. Notice also that in (6) there is the word ‘zaʕiqi’, which might be used as a nickname for club fans.

Moreover, the animal name pig used with a feminine marker did not occur in the data. This can be a result of the word pig being associated with sexuality, as mentioned above. In a conservative society, using such implications tends to be avoided, especially when females are involved, which is



the probable reason for the lack of such tweets. The issue of sexual associations with the word pig is addressed later in this paper.

Furthermore, the animal name dog occurred in racist, sexist, and ageist contexts. This indicated an association between this animal name and those three attitudes. In one example, a tweeter referred to himself as a ‘Bedouin’ and stated that the ‘Bedouins’ were better than the addressee (e.g. 7a). In another, a tweeter referred to a male’s way of acting as ‘like women’, implicitly expressing sexism by identifying women as inferior, (see 7b). In a third example an addressee was referred to as being an ‘old person’, which implies ageism on the part of the user, regardless of the addressee’s age (7)(c).

- |     |    |  |   |   |  |  |   |
|-----|----|--|---|---|--|--|---|
| (7) | a. | ʔana<br>I<br>taʒ<br>crown<br>“I am<br>crown on   | naSrawi<br>nasrawi<br>ras<br>head<br>nasrawi<br>your head,  | wagu:l:ək<br>and-I-tell-you<br>ʔahlək<br>your-family<br>and I want<br>your family’s | albadu<br>DEF-nomad-PL<br>wuTawaifk<br>and-your-tribe<br>to tell you<br>and your   | taʒ rasək<br>crown your-head<br>jakalb<br>VOC-dog<br>that the bedouins<br>tribes’, O you | wa<br>and<br><br>are the<br>dog”                              |
|     | b. | χuðlak<br>Take<br>jakalb<br>VOC-dog<br>“Here is<br>that<br>club and  | taTbi:l<br>drumming<br>int<br>you<br>some praising<br>he is Ahlawi...<br>stop                                       | min<br>from<br>wijah<br>and-him<br>from a<br>O dog,<br>acting like                  | iʕlami<br>media-figure<br>wuχal<br>and-let-go<br>media figure<br>you and<br>women” | liʕasaf<br>regretful<br>ħarakat<br>moves-POSS<br>whom I<br>him, mind                     | ahlawi<br>ahlawi<br>alhari:m<br>women<br>am sorry<br>your own |
|     | c. | sameʕni<br>let-me-hear<br>wa law int<br>and if you<br>alʕahwal<br>DEF-states<br>“Let me<br>not Itihadi,<br>any way | Sijahak<br>your-voice<br>it:ihadi<br>itihadi<br>jaʕaijb<br>VOC-elderly<br>hear you<br>and if you are<br>O old guy.” | jakalb<br>VOC-dog<br>tugaf<br>stand<br>shouting<br>(a real)                         | wa Allah<br>and Allah<br>maʕ<br>with<br>O dog. I<br>Itihadi, you                   | mant<br>not<br>alfari:g<br>DEF-team<br>swear that<br>will support                        | itihadi<br>itihadi<br>fi kul<br>in all<br>you are<br>the team |

Another strategy to demonstrate control over the addressees, or at least to feel in control, was tweeting then blocking the addressee’s account. This did not only show a desire to control one’s own Twitter accounts but also other people’s right to reply. This is a technique to manage possible vulnerability and to maintain the addresser’s face value without the need for politeness (Culpeper, 1996), as in examples (8).

- |     |    |   |   |  |  |  |  |                                    |
|-----|----|---|---|--|--|--|--|------------------------------------|
| (8) | a. | ʔahmadi<br>thank-IMP<br>bluk<br>block<br>“be thankful,<br>Here is a | rab:ik<br>you-God<br>gad<br>as-big<br>O Monkey,<br>block as | jagirdəh<br>VOC-monkey<br>alhəmar<br>DEF-donkey<br>if you find<br>big as the | ʔin lageti<br>if find<br>alwahʕi<br>wild<br>a hilali<br>zebra <sup>9</sup> | hilali<br>hilali<br>ʔl:i<br>that<br>willing<br>you are | jiʕTiki<br>give<br>tiʕaʕiʕinəh<br>support<br>to interact<br>supporting.” | wazh<br>face<br><br>‘<br>with you. |
|     | b. | agTaʕ<br>cut<br>“I would cut  | jaddi<br>my-hand<br>my hand if                              | law<br>if<br>you are hilali...   | ʔinnak<br>you-are<br>block” <sup>10</sup>                                  | hilali<br>hilali<br>block                              |  |                                    |

Some of the tweets were extended to degrade people outside the cyber domain of Twitter addressing them in the second person. Of these tweets were a tweet insulting a soccer referee (9)(a), and another insulting a soccer club president (9)(b).

- (9) a. Alkalb                      ?wfa                      mink                      jaḡanzi:r  
 DEF-dog                      more-loyal                      from-you                      VOC-pig  
 “The dog                      is more                      loyal than                      you, O pig”
- b. Allah                      jilʕank                      jakalb                      jahajawan                      jaDəfdəʕ                      Allah  
 Allah                      damn-you                      VOC-dog                      VOC-animal                      VOC-frog                      Allah  
 lajiwaf:igk                      ahlawi                      qaḏir  
 NEG-make-fit                      ahlawi                      filthy  
 “May the                      referee be                      damned.                      O dog,                      O animal,                      O frog,  
 may you not                      lead a good                      life; a dirty                      ahlawi.”

Others tweeters used insulting animal metaphors intended as banter. The number of tweets found including clear humour was 26, which is marginal, compared to the total number of tweets collected (938). The majority of these tweets addressed users of the same gender and only three addressed the other gender. Females made eighteen of these tweets, as seen in table (2).

- (10) mifari                      jakalb                      ḡalaS  
 Mishari                      VOC-dog                      finish  
 ”Mishary                      O dog,                      stop it . 🤔”

Twenty-six of the tweets included emoji’s or included the first name of the addresser, which implies friendliness, as in (10).

**Table 2**

	<u>Itihad</u>					<u>Hilal</u>					<u>Ahli</u>					<u>Nasr</u>					Grand-T
	ḡf	ḡm	ḡf	ḡm	ḡ	ḡf	ḡm	ḡf	ḡm	ḡ	ḡf	ḡm	ḡf	ḡm	ḡ	ḡf	ḡm	ḡf	ḡm	ḡ	
<i>Dog</i>	3	1			4	5			4	9		1		1	2	3		1		4	19
<i>Donkey</i>	3			1	4											2					6
<i>Monkey</i>											N/A								1	1	1
<i>pig</i>																					0
																					26

Another way to indicate friendly humorous animal metaphors was by expressing affection toward the addressee, as in (11).

- (11) a. ahəbek                      waʔaʕrif                      in:ik                      hilalijah                      jakalbah  
 I-love-you                      and-I-know                      you                      hilalijah                      VOC-dog-FEM  
 ”I love you                      and I know                      that you                      are a hilali                      O dog-FEM.”
- b. faḡSijatek                      hilwah                      ?iʕtagtil:ek                      kaθi:r                      wa ahəbek                      jakalbah  
 your-personality                      sweet                      I-miss-you                      a lot                      and I-love-you                      VOC-dog-FEM  
 ”I like your                      personality,                      I miss you                      a lot, and                      I love you                      O dog.”

Also, humour can be denoted by directly stating that something is a joke, as in (12).

- (12) Jahmarah                      hat:a                      ?ana                      amzah  
 VOC-donkey                      even                      I                      kid-V  
 ”O donkey,                      I am kidding                      too.”

- (13) liʃjunik            jahmarah            min    aljom            ʔana            naSrawijah  
          for-your-eyes    VOC-donkey        from   today        I                nasrawi-FEM  
          ”For your eyes’    sake, O donkey,    from   today on,    I support    Nasr.”

In addition, friendly humour can be indicated by a conversion of club allegiance undertaken for the sake of the addresser, which is uncommon; only 3 examples were found. Consider example (13).

The use of the four animal names analysed in this study, *dog*, *donkey*, *monkey*, and *pig*, can be linked to how the Saudi-Twitter community of practice view these animals conceptually. The majority of the posters of the collected tweets, if not all, were supposed to share an urban Saudi society. This society was labelled ‘urban’, since Twitter is a modern domain of communication, and it is Saudi since the soccer clubs are local ones. In this community of practice, dogs were degraded and considered inferior to humans in the Great Chain of Being. This is true even though in the current rural society of Saudi Arabia the dog is seen as a helpful hunter and guard. In addition, the donkey in the urban Saudi society is a symbol of stupidity. This view of donkeys is a remnant of historical situations in which they were guided, with no thinking required on the animal’s part. A monkey is a bad omen when present. It is also a symbol of ugliness since it resembles humans in its posture and limbs and is not perceived to be as good looking as a human being. As for the pig, it is an unclean animal from a religious perspective, and this view has been adopted by Saudi society. According to the contextual meaning of many of the examples found in Twitter, literal uncleanness was utilized metaphorically to indicate sexual impurity. In addition to these impressions of specific animal names, is the general association of animals with inferiority, as with dog, as reflected in the majority of the tweets collected.

**Diagram 3**

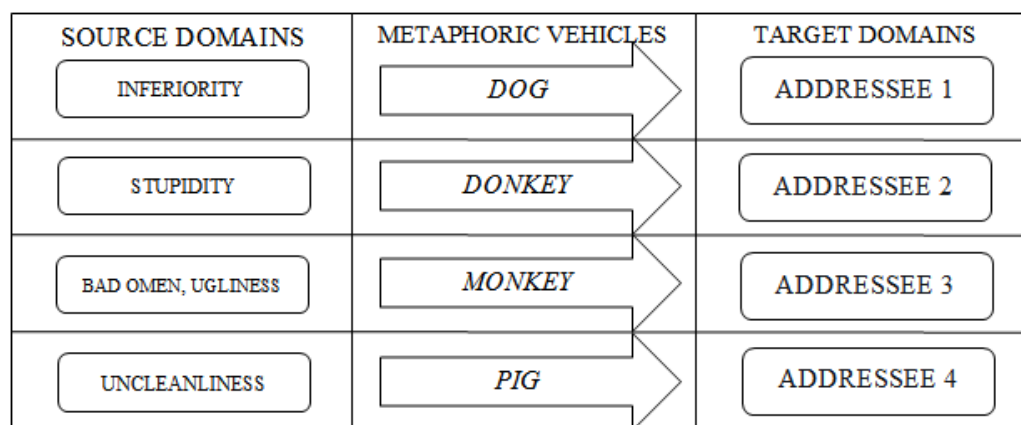


Diagram (3) details how different metaphoric vehicles are used to deliver content from different source domains to target domains in Saudi society.

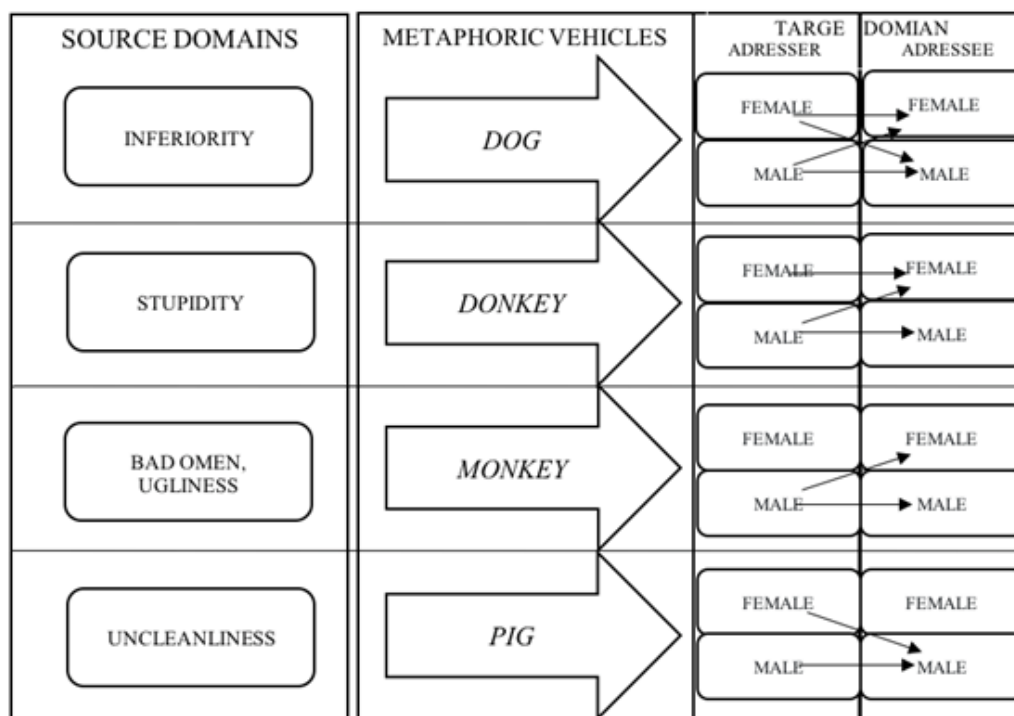
The data collected in this study revealed significant findings concerning how gender affects use of the four metaphoric vehicles examined: *dog*, *donkey*, *monkey*, and *pig*. These findings are indicative of the use of these animal names by members of the community of practice; that is soccer club fans on Twitter.

There was male/female differences found when using animal names to refer to or address humans. It was found that use of the animal name *pig* for females was perceived as more degrading than when used for males. This resembles findings in previous studies, such as Fontecha and Catalán (2003), Sun and Hsieh (2009), and Haslam, Loughnan, and Sun (2011). However, the participants in the study never used the animal name *pig* to address females due to the sexual connotation it implies, reflecting Saudi cultural etiquettes and netiquettes.

Other male/female differences did not correlate with previous studies' findings. Findings such as, the extreme contrast where it is positive to use an animal name to refer to males and negative to use the same name to refer to females. This is probably because these studies reviewed data from cultures outside Saudi Arabia. In the Saudi culture such sexist attitudes towards females were not expected since it is the norm and tradition that females are respected and honoured.

Both females and males used the metaphor *dog* with no obvious restrictions, as seen in table (1). Both males and females used the word *donkey* when addressing people of their own gender. However, although males used it to refer to females, females almost never used it to refer to males. This may be because females are looked at as mentally inferior by males, but the reverse is not true. Females almost never used the metaphor *monkey* to refer to males; such a use occurred only once in the data. This may imply that females do not show sexist attitudes when referring to males, since the word can indicate 'ugliness', whereas males showed sexist attitudes when referring to females as monkeys to indicate ugliness. This is despite the fact that men do not always see women's faces in Saudi Arabia if they are strangers to them<sup>11</sup>. In addition, males used the donkey metaphor more to address men than women, which might reflect the ratio of female to male tweeters, or simply indicate that males are less comfortable referring to females' physical appearance. As for the metaphor *pig*, its usage clarifies that sexuality is not something that Saudi people speak about freely. In particular. Its use is frowned upon when talking about sexuality in reference to females; hence, the metaphor *pig* was used the least to refer to females in the data available as a reflection of the conservative nature of the Saudi society. This then requires modification of diagram (3) to include gender related information, as presented in diagram (4) below.

**Diagram 4**



In diagram (4), the target domain column includes arrows to indicate the instances available in the data collected. When there is no arrow, there are no tweets in that direction. Diagram (4) shows the opposite situations of females being addressed or addressing others using the animal metaphors *donkey* and *monkey*, as compared to the animal metaphor *pig*. Females did not seem comfortable when using the metaphors *donkey* or *monkey* to refer to other people, since they are symbols for 'stupidity

<sup>11</sup>This reference may only be used for teasing or as an insulting strategy.

and ugliness' respectively. In addition, males and females did not feel comfortable addressing females using the metaphor pig, as it is a symbol for 'sexual impurity' in Saudi Arabia.

Overviewing previous studies that relate to metaphor and gender generally results in the conclusion that animal metaphors are used with bias against females (e.g. Fox, 2002; Haslam, Loughnan, and Sun, 2011; James, 1998; Nadežda, 2014; Rodriguez, 2009; Sun and Hsieh, 2009). When evaluating this general finding in relation to the findings in the current study we can see a mismatch in the gender of the addresser situation. In this data, males were generally insulted using animal names more than females; i.e. 178 addressing females compared, to much more than 761 addressing males<sup>12</sup>. This can be linked to the finding reported by Al-Shloul (2016), that males use more politeness strategies with females than with males. This use of politeness strategies may explain why males refrain from using animal metaphors for name calling on Twitter when addressing females, especially those metaphors that connote sexual impurity. This also corresponds with Herring (1994)'s finding that women take the addresser's face needs into consideration, which is generally not true for male to male communication online. Moreover, women refrained from using insulting words to attain respect, using a 'lady like' style. This provides additional support for women not participating as often in name calling as males, except when genuinely emotionally impacted. In addition, another factor that may affect the use of metaphors on Twitter is that women tended to participate less than men when the topic is sports-related in an online Arabic society (Al-Shloul, 2016).

In addition, interestingly many insulting animal metaphors contradict mutually expected tendencies to maintain one another's face value (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Nevertheless, Culpeper (1996) states that if one participant's face vulnerability does not match the vulnerability of the other, then maintaining face value would not be mutual. This can be connected to the fact that in many of the tweets, the name-calling was followed by blocking the addressee, which eliminated the face vulnerability of the addresser, since the addressee could not then defend their face value.

When considering the division of acts: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary, we find that the animal metaphors used in sports-fan contexts usually included all the acts to indicate true insults. In addition, the situation stated by Babou-Sekkal (2012), with regard to losing the insult's offensive function, resulted from losing its illocutionary act, something uncommon in the data considered in this study. However, when the illocutionary act was not offending, females used insults for humorous purposes as banter, more so than males. In addition, repartee was more common between an addresser and addressee of the same gender. This may result from the Saudi society being a conservative one, where in the real-world males are physically segregated from females in some educational and professional cases.

## 6 Conclusion

Analysing tweets for the purpose of looking at gender differences can reveal some important information about the society being dealt with. Conducting the current study, focusing on Saudi society, revealed some significant findings. It was found that females did not favour using metaphors that relate to ugliness, such as monkey. In addition, females in Saudi society were not usually referred to by metaphorical references to sexual impurity, implied by the animal name pig. Metaphorical expressions that have animal names as their metaphoric vehicles were usually linked to the surrounding environment of the society of use. This meant the metaphors of *dog* and *donkey* were used more frequently than the metaphors *monkey* and *pig*. Although females are fewer in number than males as

<sup>12</sup>The number of tweets in the group of males addressing males does not reflect the actual number of all tweets since when collecting the tweets only the first one hundred tweets were considered, the case of m/m, or all the tweets available, the cases of f/f, f/m, and m/f, since the availability of tweeter in Arabic in 2012.



fans of soccer clubs, they reacted positively more often than males when good causes were called for using hashtag tweets. In addition, females tended to use more emoji's to emphasise their emotions than males. This shows a gender distinction in the use of non-verbal language devices as described by Evans (2017).

Considering other social media domains for linguistic communication to search for generalizations about gender can be an informative topic to study in the future.

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