



Research Report

Kibu Denis “*Mkandaji*”: a morpho-semantic analysis of the nicknames of soccer players in Yanga and Simba football clubs in Tanzania

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Received 2 December 2025; **Accepted** 20 Mars 2026; **Published** 22 May 2026)

Abstract - The aim of this paper is to analyse the semantics and morphological properties of the nicknames given to soccer players in Yanga and Simba football clubs in Tanzania. Data were collected from social media platforms such as Jamii forum, Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram. Additionally, online newspapers and TV channels, such as TBC and Azam TV, were consulted. Lastly, the study involved face-to-face interviews with a total of 28 participants including club fans, former club leaders and former soccer players with a diverse age range and gender. The study was guided by two theories: the theory of nicknames and the lexical morphology theory. Generally, for the semantics of nicknames, the findings indicate that nicknames for both Yanga and Simba Football Clubs connote the following: nicknames relating to other popular soccer players, nicknames relating to behaviour/traits or playing styles of the players, nicknames relating to players’ physical character, nicknames relating to the origin of the players, nicknames relating to animal names and nicknames derived from mystical, military, security, and entertainment domains. Regarding the shapes of the nicknames of soccer players, compounding, associative constructions, acronyms, truncations, borrowing, and reduplication methods are notable linguistic methods employed in the creation of soccer players’ nicknames. The study recommends further research on a sociolinguistic analysis of sayings used by Yanga and Simba fans.

Keywords: nicknames, soccer players, morpho-semantic, Yanga, Simba and football club

Introduction

This study was conducted to analyse the semantics and morphological properties of nicknames given to soccer players from Yanga and Simba football clubs in Tanzania. The paper makes a significant contribution to the field of onomastics, particularly nicknames. It explores a less-explored area of nicknames in sports, notably football. Football is a famous game with many fans worldwide. Different soccer players, especially from giant football clubs, have nicknames given by fans and club supporters (Wolny 2011), by commentators/journalists (Mambwe & Da Costa 2015), by other players/teammates, or by team coaches/managers (Ndimande-Hlongwa 2010). Nicknames are bestowed on individuals due to various factors, including the behaviour of an individual, the named person's physical characteristics, disabilities, appearance, personal and social characteristics, and things that an individual always talks about (Sebashe 2007; Mapunda 2014; Taji 2024). For soccer players, nicknames are given according to the playing styles of the players (how the players perform their duties in the field of play), players' physical characteristics and commitment or social behaviour in or out of the playing field (Sebashe 2007; Ndimande-Hlongwa 2010; Babane & Chauke 2015).

Young Africans Sports Club (Yanga) and Simba Sports Club are among the most prominent and historically significant football clubs in Tanzania. Yanga was officially established in 1935 and was based in the Jangwani ward of Ilala District in Dar es Salaam. Over time, the club underwent several name changes, including *Jangwani Boys*, *Navigation Football Club*, and *New Youngs*, before adopting the name *Yanga* in 1938 (Tsuruta 2003). Similarly, Simba Sports Club is a professional football club based in the Kariakoo ward of Ilala District, Dar es Salaam. The club was founded in 1936 and, prior to being known as Simba, it had several names, including *The Queens*, *Eagles*, and *Sunderland*. In 1971, the club was officially renamed *Simba* 'lion' (Tsuruta 2003, Tsuruta 2007). Over the years, the two clubs have developed a strong and historic rivalry, commonly referred to as the Kariakoo derby, which is regarded as one of the most intense and popular football rivalries in Tanzania and East Africa.

In recent years, there has been growing academic interest in the study of nicknames in sports worldwide, yet scholarship shows that the practice of nicknaming is as old as sports (Ndimande-Hlongwa 2010; Ugwu & Ekundayo 2013; Mambwe & Da Costa 2015; Babane & Chauke 2015). The nicknames of soccer players carry social

meanings related to their referents, which may vary from one speech community to another, and, in many cases, such names are also constrained by morphological structure. Therefore, nicknames should be studied in different speech communities to determine their semantic and morphological properties. Studies have shown that different types of sports appear to entertain nicknaming practices, such as soccer, basketball, volleyball, and athletics (Babane & Chauke, 2015; Mambwe & Da Costa, 2015). However, studying soccer players' nicknames has been of great interest because of the large number of football fans worldwide (Ndimande-Hlongwa, 2010; Ugwu & Ekundayo 2013; Babane & Chauke 2015).

It is argued that a nickname refers to an expression that identifies an individual, which differs from the formal given name of the referent; it is an extra name after an original name, usually casual or informal, and coded with a sociolinguistic attitude (Ugwu & Ekundayo 2013; Mambwe & Da Costa 2015; Kabaso 2016). According to Ugwu and Ekundayo (2013), for a word or name to be called a nickname, it must coexist with another well-known name used for the object or referent, in a serious or formal setting. As pointed out earlier, soccer players are given nicknames for various reasons, such as to praise a player, insult, caricature, tease, or hide offensive issues, and for fearful meanings and images, depending on the context. Many human motivations for nicknaming vary, as the social meaning of nicknaming is closely related to the culture that employs it, and nicknaming practices are adapted to their socio-cultural context (Kennedy & Zamuner 2006; Ndimande-Hlongwa 2010). Therefore, the nicknames of soccer players carry social meanings related to their referents; in many cases, they are also constrained in their morphological structures (Kennedy & Zamuner 2006; Ndimande-Hlongwa 2010).

In Tanzania, nicknames are widely used across different semantic fields, and they have been studied by various scholars. For example, Omary (2011) examined nicknames in Bongo flava music. Also, Mapunda (2014) studied Swahili nicknames given to university lecturers by their students, and Taji (2024) analysed personal nicknames in Swahili for different semantic fields, such as religion, various socio-economic activities, and dressing style and fashion. The current study adds to the existing literature on Swahili nicknames by analysing the semantic content and morphological structure of the nicknames of soccer players in Yanga and Simba football clubs. Therefore, this article, firstly, examines the semantic interpretations of football players' nicknames from Yanga and Simba football clubs. Secondly, it identifies the morphological strategies used to coin nicknames for soccer players from Yanga and Simba football clubs.

Theoretical Framework

The current study draws upon two theories: the nickname theory developed by [Leslie](#) and [Skipper](#) (1990), and the lexical morphology theory proposed by [Kiparsky](#) (1982). The theory of nicknames has developed a form of analysis for nicknames, demonstrating that nicknames reflect aspects of the social action process. This means that people construct their sense of nicknames through social negotiation, rather than treating them as mere epiphenomena of life. The theory posits that a sociological approach would enable researchers to understand the broader context of names in terms of their meanings for individuals' inner lives and external careers. [Morgan, O'Neill and Harre'](#) (1979) pointed out that a person may be nicknamed by colleagues, playmates, friends and family and such nickname may represent him/her as others see him. Therefore, nicknames have semantic content reflecting something that can be associated with the nicknamed person.

Since the use of nicknames varies in different contexts, one name may offer many possible interpretations of the meaning(s), and without descriptions of its origin and eventual social use, all interpretations would be only speculative. [Leslie](#) and [Skipper](#) (1990: 276) pointed out that “the meanings of nicknames are not found in dictionary definitions or even necessarily in their origins, but in their uses in everyday life. The difference between a person's nickname and a behavioural description of that person is that it is only the use of the name that guarantees the meaningful identification of the person”. This theory is deemed important in analysing data related to the semantic interpretation of the nicknames of soccer players. The current study employed the framework by [Leslie](#) and [Skipper](#) (1990) where the assumption that meanings of nicknames are not found in dictionary definitions but in their uses in everyday life helped to determine the meaning of different nicknames of the soccer players from Yanga and Simba football clubs.

The theory of lexical morphology focuses on the morphological analysis of words, in which words are decomposed into small lexical components that are functionally meaningful ([Katamba 2006](#)). In this case, different word-formation processes were also considered in the morphological analysis ([Mwangi 2015](#)). The theory is a critique of American structuralists with their morpheme-based models, where they emphasized morphemes as the basic unit of morphological analysis. However, lexical morphology theory emphasizes words to be the basic unit for morphological analysis,

where different components that make up a word are at the centre of such analysis. The lexical morphological theory was useful in analysing data related to morphological properties of nicknames of soccer players.

Methodology

The present study adopted a qualitative design, which calls for multiple data collection methods and techniques (Patton 1990). The study involved collecting nicknames from Yanga and Simba football clubs. Although Tanzania has more than 30 football clubs playing in the premium league, Yanga and Simba are selected as they are the oldest clubs in the country, and they encapsulate the social, cultural, linguistic, and historical narratives of Tanzanian football (Tsuruta 2003; 2007).

The study involved two regions, Dar es Salam and Morogoro. Dar es Salaam is the region where these clubs originated and this allows direct access to core fan bases, club archives, and local histories. Also, Morogoro provides a semi-urban context, where fan culture may have different linguistic and social expressions. The study employed various methods. First, the study collected nicknames and other information about soccer players' nicknames from social media platforms such as the Jamii forum, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram. Lists of different nicknames of Yanga and Simba players were shared in social media forums by different citizens. The researcher used these social media to seek different kinds of information related to the nicknames of soccer players. In addition, the nicknames for soccer players were obtained from online newspapers and online TV Channels such as TBC and Azam.

Moreover, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with a total of 28 informants. The informants were selected through purposive sampling, focusing on snowball or chain sampling (Casteel & Bredier 2021). In Morogoro municipality, the interviews were conducted with 10 fans (5 from Yanga and 5 from Simba) selected from Mindu, Sabasaba, and Kichangani wards. Also, in Dar es Salaam, another 10 fans (5 from Yanga and 5 from Simba) were interviewed from Kariakoo, Kinondoni and Ubungu wards. In addition, the researcher interviewed 4 former club leaders (2 from each club) and 4 former soccer players (2 from each club). During the interviews, the respondents were asked to mention various nicknames of soccer players from Yanga and Simba and to provide their meanings, origins, and social interpretations.

Thematic data analysis was performed according to the procedures outlined by Braun and Clark (2006). Also, lexical morphology was employed for morphological analysis, focusing on the linguistic strategies used to form nicknames for soccer players (see Katamba 2006).

For the ethical considerations, the researcher obtained informed consent from the informants for them to participate in the current study. The informants also permitted the use of a voice recorder during the interviews by signing the consent forms. Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the relevant authorities.

The semantics of the nicknames of soccer players in Yanga and Simba football clubs

The findings of this study show the diverse semantic interpretations of the nicknames given to soccer players in Simba and Yanga football clubs. The semantic interpretations of such nicknames are categorised as follows: nicknames relating to other popular soccer players, nicknames relating to behaviour/traits or playing styles of the players, nicknames relating to players' physical character, nicknames relating to the origin of the players, nicknames relating to animal names and miscellaneous nicknames. Each of these categories is discussed in the following subsections.

Nicknames relating to other popular soccer players

Many soccer players have been highly influential in the world of sports, and their exceptional performance in the field of play has led to their names being used as references for other players. Such names of popular football players have been crucial in the community and are used as nicknames for other football players, mainly based on similarities in their playing styles, talents, and achievements. Therefore, the connection between the two players can be associated with their shared legacy or talent, which can be reflected in their playing styles. Table 1 presents nicknames related to other popular soccer players.

Table 1 presents different soccer players from Yanga and Simba¹ who obtained their nicknames from other popular football players. The findings show that people always prefer using the names in brackets rather than the full names. Popular soccer players played in different giant clubs around the globe, such as *Fabio Cannavaro* (Italian national team), *Zvonimir Boban* (AC Milan), *Nemanja Vidic* (Manchester United),

¹ It is important to note that different players have played in both Yanga and Simba.

Fabian Barthez (France), *Nélson de Jesus da Silva* (AC Milan), *Gaizka Mendieta* (Barcelona), and *Lawrence Siphiwe Tshabalala* (Kaizer Chiefs). As noted earlier, different soccer players from Yanga and Simba football clubs were given these names because of comparisons of their playing styles and achievements. The study also revealed that some nicknames have become so common that they are now considered part of the players' official names, such as *Nadir Haroub Cannavaro*, *Haruna Moshi Boban*, *Deogratius Munish Dida* and *Mohamed Hossein Tshabalala*. These findings are congruent with those of other studies, which also show that nicknames are derived from the names of other popular football players (Ndimande-Hlongwa 2010; Mambwe & Da Costa 2015; Babane & Chauke 2015).

Table 1: Nicknames relating to other popular soccer players

Name of football player	Nickname	Preferred Nickname
<i>Nadir Haroub</i>	<i>Fabio Cannavaro</i>	(Cannavaro)
<i>Kelvin Yondani</i>	<i>Nemanja Vidić</i>	(Vidić)
<i>Haruna Moshi</i>	<i>Zvonimir Boban</i>	(Boban)
<i>Steven Mapunda</i>	<i>Manuel Francisco dos Santos</i>	(Garrincha)
<i>Deogratius Munish</i>	<i>Nélson de Jesus da Silva</i>	(Dida)
<i>Ally Mustapha</i>	<i>Fabian Barthez</i>	(Barthez)
<i>Haruna Niyonzima</i>	<i>Francesc Fàbregas Soler</i>	(Fabregas)
<i>Wazir Mahadhi</i>	<i>Gaizka Mendieta Zabala</i>	(Mendieta)
<i>Mohamed Hossein</i>	<i>Lawrence Siphiwe Tshabalala</i>	(Tshabalala)

Nicknames relating to behaviour/traits or playing styles of the players

The findings show that the nicknames acquired in this category reflect the bearer's behaviour/ traits or the playing style of a player as seen and judged by different community members, such as soccer fans, soccer leaders and fellow players. Table 2 presents the different nicknames related to behavioural traits or playing styles.

Table 2: Nicknames relating to behaviour/ traits or playing styles of the players

Name of the player	Nickname	Gloss
<i>Kibu Denis</i>	<i>Mkandaji</i>	‘Kneader’
<i>Che Fondoh Malone</i>	<i>Ukuta wa Yeriko</i>	‘Jericko wall’
<i>Djigui Diarra</i>	<i>Screen protector</i>	Screen protector
<i>Samli Ayubu</i>	<i>Beki mstaarabu</i>	‘Civilized defender’
<i>Malota Soma</i>	<i>Ball juggler</i>	Ball juggler
<i>Mao Mkami</i>	<i>Ball dancer</i>	Ball dancer
<i>Mohamed Mwameja</i>	<i>Tanzania one</i>	Tanzania one
<i>Scudo Makudumela</i>	<i>Waziri wa raha</i>	‘Minister of happiness’
<i>Khalid Aucho</i>	<i>Daktari wa Mpira</i>	‘Football doctor’
<i>Pacome Zouzoua</i>	<i>Profesa</i>	Professor
<i>Sunday Manara</i>	<i>Computer</i>	Computer
<i>Abubakar Salum</i>	<i>Sure Boy</i>	Sure boy
<i>Zamoyoni Mogella</i>	<i>Golden Boy</i>	Golden Boy

Table 2 presents the nicknames of soccer players from Yanga and Simba; the names are derived from how the players perform their duties on the field of play. *Kibu Denis* is known as *Mkandaji* ‘kneader’ due to his playing style as a forward; his strong shooting has been related to kneading, hence his nickname. Findings show further that *Kibu* is a key figure in Simba Sports Club because of his incredible speed around the field of play and such speed also earned him the second nickname, *Mzee wa mikimbio* ‘a man who runs’. *Che Fondoh Malone* is nicknamed *ukuta wa yeriko* ‘Jericko wall’. The Holy Bible shows that Jericko wall was intended to protect the settlement and its people from human intruders. The name was given to *Che Malone* who plays the role of defender in

the Simba sports club because of his exceptional defensive capabilities. *Djigui Diarra* is nicknamed a *screen protector* because of his exceptional goalkeeping skills in preventing opponents from scoring. The screen protector is a protective layer for electronics, and this name highlights *Diarra's* ability to block or prevent goals, just as a screen protector prevents damage to a device's screen. Other players were generally nicknamed by following their playing styles, such as good at ball juggling-*ball juggler*, good at dancing with a ball- *ball dancer* and being calm in defending- *beki mstaarabu* 'civilized defender'. The behavioural traits and general performance of the player in the field of play are also at the centre of nicknaming, where general outstanding performances in the playground have made various players nicknamed differently; for example, *Khalid Aucho-Daktari wa mpira* 'a doctor of football,' *Pacome Zouzoua-Professor* 'a professor in football,' *Sunday Manara- computer* and *Mohamed Muameja- Tanzania one*.

Furthermore, *Abubakar Salum* is known as *Sure Boy* because of his exceptional performance in the field. He is known for his incredible speed, precise crosses, accurate passes, and goal-scoring ability. He consistently delivered excellently in every match, hence, this name. *Zamoyoni Mogella* earned the nickname *Golden Boy* for his exceptional performance in this field. The findings show that one of his most memorable moments came during the match between Taifa Stars and Malawi. With just two minutes remaining and the scoreboard tied at 1-2; Mogella cleared a crucial goal: securing the draw for Taifa Stars. Fans praised his skills and resilience, and called him the *Golden Boy*. Such a nickname became very common when he was in the Simba Sports Club in the 1980s due to his brilliant performance.

These findings are similar to those of other studies ([Babane & Chauke 2015](#); [Ndimande-Hlongwa, 2010](#)). For example, according to [Babane and Chauke \(2015\)](#), *Jabu Mahlangu* was nicknamed *Shuffle the Pack* and the name was bestowed on him because of the manner in which he was bold when facing opponents. In addition, *Johannes Makhathini* earned his nickname *Roadblock* because of his style of defending, which made it difficult for his opponents to progress.

Nicknames relating to player's physical character

The findings show that soccer players are given different nicknames based on their physical appearance. Physical appearance can be easily captured by observing the players. A person's body is an easy target for creating a nickname. Examples of nicknames given based on players' physical characteristics appear in Table 3.

Table 3: Nicknames relating to physical character

Name of the player	Nickname	Gloss
<i>Mohamed Bakari</i>	<i>Tall</i>	Tall
<i>Victor Costa</i>	<i>Nyumba</i>	House
<i>Shadrack Nsajigwa</i>	<i>Fuso</i>	Type of truck
<i>Peter Lupokela</i>	<i>Gari kubwa</i>	Truck (big vehicle)
<i>Godwin Aswile-</i>	<i>Scania</i>	Heavy-duty truck

The nicknames of soccer players presented in Table 3 reflect an individual's physical characteristics or shape. The study identified different nicknames related with vehicles such as, *Fuso* 'type of medium or heavy-duty truck', *gari kubwa* 'truck' ('big vehicle') and *Scania* 'a type of heavy-duty vehicle'. The findings indicate that such names are associated with the physical appearance of the players and their strengths in the playground; for example, players' bodies or strengths are associated with heavy trucks. These findings are consistent with those from other studies which also showed that soccer players obtain nicknames based on their physical characters (Adetunji 2010; Babane & Chauke 2015). Babane and Chauke (2015) pointed out that there are different nicknames bestowed on players in South Africa due to their physical characteristics, for example *Johannes Makhathini* earned the nickname *Roadblock* due to his toughness and ability to play the whole game without showing any sign of tiredness.

Nicknames relating to the origin of the players

The findings of the present study show that there are nicknames derived from the geographical origin of the player or where the player is coming from. Table 4 presents the nicknames related to the player's origin.

Table 4 presents nicknames of soccer players associated with their origins. *Clatous Chota Chama* is a professional player from Lusaka, Zambia. He was given the nickname *Mwamba wa Lusaka* literary means 'a rock from Lusaka' due to his incredible performance in the playground. Similarly, *Saido Ntibazonkiza* is a Burundian professional footballer and he is known as *Godfather wa Bujumbura* which literary means 'Godfather of Bujumbura'. He was praised due to his outstanding performance as an attacking midfielder. Such a nickname is derived from the capital city of Burundi, Bujumbura.

Similarly, *Feisal Salumu* is nicknamed *Zanzibar finest* as Zanzibar is his origin. Moreover, tribes are used in presenting the origin of the player, for example, *Iddi Moshi* is known as *Mnyamwezi*, a Nyamwezi person from Tabora region and *Mohamed Hussein* is nicknamed *Mmachinga*, ‘Machinga person from Mtwara region’. Districts and regions are also used such as *Zico wa Kilosa* ‘Zico from Kilosa district’ in Morogoro region and *Msingida* ‘a person from Singida region’. These findings are congruent with other studies which revealed that there are different nicknames given to soccer players, coaches and to the clubs due to their origins (Kennedy & Zamuner 2006; Ndimande-Hlongwa 2010). For example, the study by Ndimande-Hlongwa (2010) pointed out that *Peter Ndlove*, the former player from Mamelodi Sundowns, is named *Bulawayo Bullet*, where Bulawayo is the city in Zimbabwe which is the origin of Peter.

Table 4: Nicknames relating to the origin of the player

Name of the player	Nickname	Gloss
<i>Clatous Chama</i>	<i>Mwamba wa Lusaka</i>	‘A striker from Lusaka’
<i>Saido Ntibazonkiza</i>	<i>Godfather wa Bujumbura</i>	Godfather from Bujumbura
<i>Feisal Salum</i>	<i>Zanzibar Finest</i>	<i>Zanzibar finest</i>
<i>Rajab Rashidi</i>	<i>Msingida</i>	<i>One from Singida region</i>
<i>Mohamed Hussein</i>	<i>Mmachinga (from Mtwara)</i>	<i>One from Mtwara region</i>
<i>Said Mrisho</i>	<i>Zico wa Kilosa</i>	<i>Zico from Kilosa</i>
<i>Iddi Moshi</i>	<i>Mnyamwezi, (from Tabora)</i>	<i>Nyamwezi person</i>
<i>Mudathir Yahya</i>	<i>Zanzibar greatest</i>	<i>Zanzibar greatest</i>

Nicknames relating to animal names

Various soccer players obtained nicknames derived from animal names, and such names reflected their playing styles, physical attributes, or personalities. These attributes and playing styles were associated with animal attributes. Table 5 presents various nicknames derived from the names of animals.

Table 5: Nicknames relating to animal names

Name of the player	Nickname	Gloss
<i>Jonas Mkude</i>	<i>Nungunungu</i>	Porcupine
<i>Iddi Selemani</i>	<i>Nyigu</i>	Wasp
<i>Elias Michael</i>	<i>Nyoka mweusi</i>	Black snake
<i>Athumani Iddi Chama</i>	<i>Jogoo</i>	Cock
<i>Abbas Dilunga</i>	<i>Sungura</i>	Rabbit
<i>Mzamiru Yassin</i>	<i>Kiungo Punda</i>	Donkey midfielder

Different animals are used to derive nicknames for soccer players by associating player traits to those of animals, with a focus on players' physical attributes and playing styles. From Table 5, *Jonas Mkude* is nicknamed as *Nungunungu* 'porcupine' which is an animal with sharp quills that serve as a defense mechanism against predators. Such an animal shoots its quills when touched or when it detects an attacker. The findings of the study show that *Mkude* was named after such an animal because of his incredible playing style when he is in the field of play, as he is bold when facing opponents, which is associated with the porcupine's shooting behaviour. *Iddi Selemani* is known as *nyigu* 'wasp' which is an insect that has a stinger that can deliver a painful sting, often accompanied by venom. *Selemani* earned the nickname *nyigu* 'wasp' due to his exceptional ability on the field, which often resulted in goals, drawing a parallel to the stinging nature of a wasp. *Elias Michael* was nicknamed *Nyoka mweusi* 'black snake' due to his smooth speed in a field of play like a black snake. *Abbas Dilunga* is nicknamed as *sungura* 'rabbit' due to his cleverness in the field of play which helps him in facing the opponents. *Mzamiru Yassin* is nicknamed *kiungo punda* 'donkey midfielder' because of his great work in playing as a midfielder. His incredible performance in the field is comparable to that of a donkey, a domesticated animal known for its hard work in transport and agriculture. Literature shows that different soccer players, athletes, and football clubs are nicknamed after animals ([Bobyreva 2010](#); [Ndimande-Hlongwa 2010](#);

Rababah et al. 2024). Bobbyreva (2010) presented various animal names used for nicknaming soccer players, for example, Cat (Cuttino Mobley), Kangaroo Kid (Billy Cunningham), Horse (Dan Issel), Spider (John Salley), Big Dog (Glenn Robinson), Mighty Mouse (Damon Stoudamire), the Squid (Sidney Moncrief), the Snake (Mike King) and the Bear (Mark Smith).

Nicknames derived from mystical, military, security, and entertainment domains

There are different nicknames of soccer players that are collectively categorised as originating from mystical, military, security, and entertainment domains. Table 6 presents the nicknames of soccer players derived from mystical, military, security, and entertainment domains.

Table 6: Nicknames derived from mystical, military, security, and entertainment domains

Name of football player	Nickname
<i>Ezekiel Grayson</i>	<i>Jujuman</i>
<i>Abeid Mziba</i>	<i>Tekelo</i>
<i>Sued Said</i>	<i>Scud</i>
<i>Meddie Kagere</i>	<i>MK 14</i>
<i>Said Maulid Yanga</i>	<i>SMG</i>
<i>Daudi Salum</i>	<i>Bruce Lee</i>
<i>Salum Kabunda</i>	<i>Ninja</i>
<i>Deo Njohole</i>	<i>OCD</i>
<i>David Mwakalebela</i>	<i>MP</i>
<i>Hamis Gaga</i>	<i>Gagarinho</i>
<i>Said Mwamba</i>	<i>Kizota</i>
<i>Mwanamtwa Kihwelo</i>	<i>Dalii Kimoko</i>
<i>Celestine Mbunga</i>	<i>Sikinde</i>

From Table 6, the first set presents two nicknames that are associated with traditional witchcraft (mystical domain) namely *Tekelo* and *Jujuman*. *Abeid Mziba* is known as *Tekelo* and his nickname originates from Mziba's reputation for scoring decisive goals. The term *Tekelo* is associated with traditional witchcraft and mythical beliefs. Fans gave him this nickname, because the goals he scored were often seen as final and

unassailable, much like an irreversible act of magic. *Jujuman* is a traditional healer or spiritual leader who practices *juju* and is very common in West African culture. It is a form of magic tied to traditional African religions, believed to harness supernatural powers for rituals, healing, protection, and influencing outcomes. *Ezekiel Grayson* is nicknamed *Jujuman* due to his incredible playing style, which was associated with *Jujumen*.

The second set of examples from Table 6 is related to weapons or armaments (military domain) such as *Scud* (a type of missile), *MK 14* (enhanced battle rifle), and *SMG* (a submachine gun). *Scud* refers to tactical ballistic missiles designated for war. *Sued Said* is nicknamed *scud* due to his powerful shots and his striking behaviour with a precision that is associated with scud missiles. *MK 14* refers to an enhanced battle rifle widely used in the military and other armed forces. *Meddie Kagere* is known as *MK 14* because of his strong shots associated with the *MK 14* rifle.

Furthermore, other set of nicknames is related to entertainment domains such as names of actors in the action movies and the names of musicians, such as *Bruce Lee*, *Ninja*, *Dally Kimoko* and *Sikinde*. *Bruce Lee* is a legendary martial actor who is widely regarded as one of the most influential martial artists. *Daudi Salum* was named *Bruce Lee* because he was jumping with agility and precision in the field of play like *Bruce Lee*. *Salum Kabunda* was nicknamed *Ninja* as a famous character in action movies, where *Ninja* is a person trained in martial arts and regarded as very strong in fighting. *Kabunda* was associated with *Ninja* in the field of play. On the other hand, some soccer players' nicknames are derived from the names of famous musicians. For example, *Dally Kimoko*, a renowned musician from Congo, was used as a nickname for *Mwanamtwa Kihwelo*, while *Celestine Mbunga* was nicknamed *Sikinde*, after the Tanzanian music group DDC Mlimani Park Orchestra, popularly known as *Sikinde Ngoma ya Ukae*. The respondents reported that names of prominent entertainers, such as actors (*Bruce Lee*, *Ninja*) and musicians (*Dally Kimoko*, *Sikinde*), are used to form nicknames for soccer players based on perceived similarities in skill, fame, or outstanding performance.

Furthermore, there are nicknames related to security officers, such as *OCD*, officer commanding district, and *MP*, Mwanza Patrol. *Deo Njohole* was nicknamed *OCD* for his exceptional playing ability in the field of play, and he had the ability to challenge many renowned players. *David Mwakalebela* was nicknamed *MP* for his solid and defensive playing style on the right back. The nickname was given to him because his defensive style was compared to that of Mwanza police officers, who were very bold

during security patrols. The nickname was used because his defensive playing style was similar to the boldness and bravery displayed by Mwanza police officers during their security patrols. This comparison highlights the players' strength, fearless, and protective approach in the field, much like the officers' role in safeguarding and maintaining order.

Furthermore, there are nicknames that are drawn from the names used for other characteristic features; for example, *Hamis Gaga* was nicknamed *Gagarinho* by fans because of his exceptional ball control, which reminded them of the skillful style of talented Brazilian players. The nickname was inspired by the tradition of Brazilian footballers' names which end with the suffix '*inho*' for example, Ronaldinho, Coutinho and Robinho. Therefore, they formed the nickname *Gagarinho* to reflect the Brazilian talented players. Similarly, *Said Mwamba* is known as *Kizota*. *Kizota* is a CCM (Chama cha Mapinduzi) meeting hall in Dodoma region, where many important debates and decisions are made. The findings show that the nickname *Kizota* was given to *Said Mwamba* for his outstanding performance. Fans were impressed by his playing style and began asking one another if anyone was against his brilliance, for which the answer was consistently 'no'. This questioning process reminded them of how decisions were made in the *Kizota* hall, leading to the nickname being associated with *Said Mwamba*.

Morphological Properties of Soccer Player Nicknames

The findings indicate that the morphological structure of soccer players' nicknames can be categorised into simple and complex nicknames. Simple nicknames consist of a single stem, whereas complex nicknames consist of more than one stem. Examples of simple nicknames include *Best* (George Kulagwa), *Carlos* (Salum Mwinyimkuu), *Veron* (Selemani Matola), and *Computer* (Sunday Manara).

The study found that complex nicknames are formed through compounding, reduplication, and adnominal constructions. Other strategies involved in forming nicknames for players in Yanga and Simba sports clubs include borrowing, acronyms, and truncations, as detailed in the following subsections.

Compounding

The findings show that there are nicknames of soccer players formed through compounding. It involves the combination of two or more words/lexemes to form one word (Katamba 1993). Various nicknames of soccer players from Yanga and Simba that are formed through compounding are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Compound nicknames for soccer players

Name of the Player	Nickname	Gloss
<i>Elias Michael</i>	<i>Nyoka mweusi</i>	Black snake
<i>Bakari Malima</i>	<i>Jembe ulaya</i>	European hoe
<i>Mzamiru Yassin</i>	<i>Kiungo punda</i>	Donkey midfielder
<i>Hassan Afif</i>	<i>Kocha-mchezaji</i>	Player coach
<i>Samli Ayubu</i>	<i>Beki Mstaarabu</i>	Wise back
<i>Djigui Diarra</i>	<i>Screen protector</i>	Screen protector
<i>Zamoyoni Mogella</i>	<i>Golden boy</i>	Golden boy
<i>Abubakar Salum</i>	<i>Sure boy</i>	Sure boy
<i>Stephane Aziz Ki</i>	<i>Master key</i>	Master key
<i>Mao Mkami</i>	<i>Ball dancer</i>	Ball dancer
<i>Malota Soma</i>	<i>Ball juggler</i>	Ball juggler

Table 7 presents different compound nicknames of soccer players and such compounds are formed by combining different word categories. The findings show that the common combinations of word categories in the formation of such nicknames are noun + adjective e.g., *Nyoka Mweusi* ‘black snake’ and noun + noun e.g., *Jembe Ulaya* ‘European hoe’. These findings are in line with those from other studies, for example, [Kennedy](#) and [Zamuner \(2006\)](#) in their study on nicknames and the lexicon of sports, pointed out that nicknames of the players are formed through compounding and phrasal constructions (descriptive nicknames).

Reduplication

The findings show that there are nicknames for soccer players from Yanga and Simba sports clubs that are formed through reduplication, where the stem of the nickname is repeated. Table 8 presents the different nicknames of soccer players in Yanga and Simba formed through reduplication.

Table 8: Reduplicated nicknames of soccer players

Player name	Nickname
<i>Freddy Michael</i>	<i>Fungafunga</i>
<i>Jobe Ayubu</i>	<i>Kwasakwasa</i>
<i>Jonas Mkude</i>	<i>Nungunungu</i>
<i>Moussa Camara</i>	<i>Pinpin</i>

Table 8 presents nicknames of soccer players that are formed through reduplication and studies (e.g., Legère 2009) show that one of the important functions of reduplication is intensification and providing emphasis. For example, *Freddy Michael* earned the nickname *Fungafunga*, literary means ‘scoring frequently’ to emphasize his consistent habit of scoring multiple times in games. The reduplication in *Fungafunga* highlights the repetitive and frequent nature of his scoring, making the nickname a fitting attribute of his talent. The findings indicate that *Kwasakwasa* is the nickname that originated from the dancing style in DRC that was associated with Jobe Ayubu’s playing style. Such dancing style involves unexpected body movements; Jobe’s playing style is tricky which makes it hard for defenders to predict his next move.

Adnominal constructions or phrasal nicknames

Adnominal constructions or associative constructions are common in most Bantu languages (Ilonga 2024). An adnominal construction comprises a lexeme as the headword, an associative marker, and a word that functions as an adnominal modifier. The results demonstrate the nicknames of various football players created through adnominal constructions. Table 9 presents nicknames formed through adnominal constructions.

The nicknames presented in Table 9 are formed through associative constructions involving different semantic interpretations, for example, the origin of the players (e.g., *Mwamba wa Lusaka*) and the trait or behavior of the player (e.g., *Mzee wa Kiminyio*). Using associative constructions in forming nicknames for soccer players is not strange, as other studies have presented nicknames formed through associative constructions (see Kennedy & Zamuner 2006; Babane & Chauke 2015)

Table 9: Nicknames formed through adnominal constructions

Name of the player	Nicknames	Gloss
<i>Makumbi Juma</i>	<i>Homa ya jiji</i>	Fever of the city
<i>Clotous Chama</i>	<i>Mwamba wa Lusaka</i>	A striker from Lusaka
<i>Saido Ntibazonkiza</i>	<i>Godfather</i> wa <i>Bujumbura</i>	Godfather from Bujumbura
<i>Said Mrisho</i>	<i>Zico wa kilosa</i>	Zico from Kilosa
<i>Khalid Aucho</i>	<i>Daktari wa mpira</i>	Doctor of football
<i>Madarak Selemeni</i>	<i>Mzee wa kiminyio</i>	‘Pressing man’
<i>Scudo Makudumela</i>	<i>Waziri wa raha</i>	Minister of happiness

Borrowing

The study found that there are different nicknames for soccer players borrowed from other languages. For example, nicknames borrowed from English to Swahili and nicknames made up of Swahili and English (hybrid). Table 10 presents pure Swahili nicknames borrowed from English and hybrid nicknames of soccer players.

Table 10: Nicknames borrowed from English and hybrid nicknames of soccer players

Name of the player	Nickname
<i>Muhamed Husein</i>	<i>Zimbwe Junior</i>
<i>Ezekiel Grayson</i>	<i>Jujuman</i>
<i>Saido Ntibazonkiza</i>	<i>Godfather wa Bujumbura</i>
<i>Samli Ayubu</i>	<i>Beki Mustaarabu</i>

In Table 10, the findings show that there are nicknames that are hybrids or made up of Swahili and English words, for example, *Godfather wa Bujumbura* and *Zimbwe Junior*. In addition, there are nicknames borrowed from English to Swahili; for example, *Beki* ‘back’ -defender in *Beki Mustaarabu*. [Dzahene-Quarshie \(2012\)](#) in the study about

English loans in Swahili newspaper football language, pointed out that one of the words borrowed from English is *beki/mabeki*- *back* (literal translation) -*defender* (English equivalent).

Acronyms and Truncations

For acronyms, the name is shortened to initials or abbreviations. Truncation is the act of making something shorter or quicker, especially by removing the end of it, for example, by removing some elements from the word. It involves shortening the name or term to create a simpler version (Dzahene-Quarshie 2012). Different examples of soccer player nicknames formed Examples of soccer player nicknames formed by using acronyms and truncations are shown in Table 11.

In Table 11, the first five examples present nickname formed through acronyms, including OCD, officer commanding district and MP, Mwanza Patrol. RP, Raphael Paul, MK 14, Meddie Kagere enhanced battle rifle and SMG, submachine gun. Other examples (sixth to ninth examples) present nicknames formed through truncations, for example, Edgar Mwafongo, Fongo. Supporting acronyms and truncation strategies in the formation of nicknames and word formation process generally, Moehkardi (2016) pointed out that there is a growing research interest for these strategies in the 20th century amid the vast growth of computer use and electronic communication and due to their economic and humorous nature.

Table 11: Nicknames formed through Acronyms and Truncations

Name of the player	Nickname
<i>Deo Njohole</i>	<i>OCD</i>
<i>David Mwakalebela</i>	<i>MP</i>
<i>Raphael Paul</i>	<i>RP</i>
<i>Meddie Kagere</i>	<i>MK 14</i>
<i>Said Maulid</i>	<i>SMG</i>
<i>Jimmy Mored</i>	<i>Moro</i>
<i>Edward Chumila</i>	<i>Edo boy</i>
<i>Thomas Kipese</i>	<i>Uncle Tom</i>
<i>Edgar Mwafongo</i>	<i>Fongo</i>

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant role of semantics and morphological properties in the formation of soccer player nicknames in Yanga and Simba football clubs in Tanzania. The findings reveal that these nicknames are not assigned arbitrarily but are deeply rooted in players' traits, players' origins, players' physical characteristics, and even external references, such as names of other famous players and animal symbolism. Furthermore, various linguistic processes, including compounding, associative constructions, acronyms, truncations, borrowing, and reduplication contribute to the structural formation of these nicknames.

This study brings to the fore the contextual and linguistic creativity involved in nickname formation within Tanzanian football communities. Given the social and communicative importance of these nicknames, further research is recommended to explore the sociolinguistic aspects of the sayings and expressions used by Yanga and Simba fans, providing deeper insights into football discourse.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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