

A PSYCHOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF EMOTIONAL PATTERNS IN FOOTBALL FAN DISCOURSE: SOCIAL MEDIA REACTIONS TO SPANISH LA LIGA MATCHES (APRIL 2025)

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ABSTRACT

Social media has completely changed how fans talk about and experience football today. This study examined Facebook comments on football events, focusing specifically on the Spanish La Liga, to understand how fans expressed emotions and interacted with their favorite teams. We looked at posts from active football pages, including Fabrizio Romano (20M followers), Real Madrid C.F (131M followers), FC Barcelona - Barca Insider (533K followers), Viva Barca (6.7M followers), and The Nation of Blaugrana (556K followers). The study analyzed fan reactions around four key matches, including Real Madrid 1: Atlético Bilbao 0, Barcelona 4: Celta Vigo 3, Getafe 0: Real Madrid 1, and Leganés 0: Barcelona 1. Comments were selected based on engagement, relevance to match events, and emotional depth, capturing the full range of intense, humorous, sarcastic, and superstitious expressions fans used to process outcomes. The data were gathered during the April 2025 La Liga matches, focusing on the before and after match comments. A qualitative approach using thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns in fans' posts, revealing how emotions are expressed through words, emojis, punctuations, and humor. The study highlighted how wins and losses trigger celebratory, critical, anxious, and rivalry reactions, showing the complexity of fan engagement. By examining language and emotional content, this study demonstrated the strong personal and social connections fans had with their teams, emphasizing how social media transformed football into a space for intense emotional experience and identity expression.

Keywords: *Discourse Analysis, Emotional Expression, Football Events, Linguistic Patterns, Social Media*

INTRODUCTION

Football, as a global phenomenon, has evolved significantly since its formal codification in the 19th century. October 2013 marked the 150th anniversary of the Football Association. The 26th October 1863 was recognized as the official beginning of association football, or soccer. This contemporary sport has "little or nothing in common with the football for which twelve distinctly upper-middle-class gentlemen adopted the first 'universal code' of rules" (Kitching, 2015). Early football did not recognize a specialist goalkeeper and allowed various scoring methods, including 'touchdowns' (Kitching, 2015). The search for football's origins often overlooks its developmental process, as the sport has transitioned from its amateur roots to a highly commercialized entity.

The manner in which football travelled the globe shaped its significance. Football diffused along the channels of the British Empire during the nineteenth century. Europeans brought the sport to Africa, Asia, and Latin America through educational institutions, commerce, and colonial government (Elsley & Pugliese, 2017). Elites in the global South returned from travels in Europe with a passion for football. As quickly as the sport arrived, local athletes and clubs embraced and reshaped it. The language, the food, the celebrations, and aesthetics that surround the game reflect the wide variety of adaptations that football underwent. The structure of governance and the relationship with local politics differed dramatically across the world. The sporting press, central to the growing popularity of football, became a cornerstone of mass media by the 1920s and 1930s (Elsley & Pugliese, 2017).

In the early period of 1863-1880, association football "developed through a combination of rule changes and changes in play" (Kitching, 2015). From the 1880s, however, "the basic rules of the game were largely settled," but its play continued to evolve significantly, especially after its professionalization, and this evolution has continued throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century (Kitching, 2015). Alongside these developments, major changes occurred in the universities of Europe and the United States. In the late nineteenth century, academics professionalized their disciplines, with historians shifting from legitimizing royal families to building the narratives of republican nation-states (Elsley & Pugliese, 2017).

Historical narratives often lay emphasis on public school codification, neglecting the popularity of folk football, which was primarily played by working-class individuals, which was influenced by industrial societies. This connection to football makes it a rich area for studying how people express emotions on social media.

Millions of fans worldwide invest time, energy, and money in supporting their favorite teams every year. In doing so, sports fans engage in a variety of behaviours that reflect their passion and commitment to their teams (Vallerand et al., 2008). Historically, fans communicated face-to-face, via telephone, or through email about game outcomes or team-related news. However, the influx of social media represents a new and more appealing communication platform (Mudrick, Miller, & Atkin, 2016). For instance, Laird (2012, as cited in Mudrick, Miller, & Atkin, 2016) found out that "26% of sport fans utilized social media in an attempt to connect with teams, leagues, and players." Fans preferred to use networks such as Facebook and Twitter to get information over nationwide news sites.

Football is the most popular sport in the world, and it evokes strong emotions such as joy, pride, sadness, and anger among fans. Social media has become a place where fans share these feelings, providing researchers with valuable information to study. While many studies have examined how social media affects sports and fan engagement (Vale & Fernandes, 2018, as cited in Mudrick et al., 2016), there remains a gap in understanding the specific language fans use to express their emotions during wins and losses. Despite this, the modern fan experience appears to be shifting, as some supporters engage more for rivalry or personal satisfaction than for the game itself, influencing how emotions such as joy, anger, and frustration are expressed online. Capturing these emotional patterns on social media is therefore essential for understanding contemporary football fandom.

This study conducts a psycholinguistic analysis of fans' reactions to wins and losses on social media. It addresses three questions: What linguistic patterns and emotional expressions emerge after wins and losses? How are words, emojis, and punctuation used to convey excitement, frustration, or rivalry? And how do match outcomes influence the intensity and type of emotions expressed? The study focuses on 20 active Facebook users who frequently comment on football, with follower counts ranging from hundreds of thousands to over 100 million. Reactions were analyzed from four Spanish La Liga matches, two wins (Real Madrid 1: Atlético Bilbao 0; Barcelona 4: Celta Vigo 3) and two losses (Getafe 0: Real Madrid 1; Leganés 0: Barcelona 1). Examining these interactions provides insight into online fan language and community dynamics, while also contributing to broader discussions on emotional well-being, social identity, and rivalry in digital sports spaces.

In some contexts, football transcends mere sport, becoming intertwined with national identity, culture, and politics. For example, in Cameroon, "football has

now assumed not only a sportive, but also political, economic and mystical status" (Nkwi, 2012). Nkwi (2012) also notes that since the 1980s, football "serves often as a unifying factor in moments of frustration for millions of people whose rulers seem to be unable to deal with the effects of poverty." This strong connection to football makes it an ideal subject for studying emotional expression on social media. The act of representing, narrating, and interpreting history became a fertile ground for debate throughout the twentieth century (Eley & Pugliese, 2017). By the early twentieth century, critics charged that historians who had privileged the "great men" of the past denied agency to the masses and neglected to account for the importance of long-term structures. These voices became dominant by the mid-century, reflecting the democratization of higher education in the post-World War II period and the influence of feminist, civil rights, and anti-colonial movements. The first football histories emerged from social histories, which sought to understand the continuities and changes in the lives of everyday people (Eley & Pugliese, 2017).

The broader concern with sports and power weighs heavily on the study of football. Football, and culture more broadly, do not reflect history in any general or obvious way. If that were true, then the dominance of players from the global South would reflect the power of their homelands in global affairs. Instead, football reflects elements of reality: reconfigured, twisted, and subjective. Football has maintained the status quo in perpetuating stereotypes, enriching elites, and serving nationalism. However, it has also inspired alternatives to entrenched identities and inequitable civic organization. Indeed, that is a central part of its attraction for fans. Its global popularity has increased football's capacity to serve as a "field of dreams." This has not been lost on the world governing body, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), or multinational corporations that have used the notion of global language to sell products and garner lucrative contracts (Eley & Pugliese, 2017). The football game, placed in a certain social context, "points to the fact that football acquires different specificities depending on the environment in which it develops" (Giulianotti, 2008, as cited in Milenković & Milenković, 2024). This interaction indicates that football not only reflects social values but also "leaves its mark on social development" (Milenković & Milenković, 2024).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature reviewed in this work provides an overview of existing research on fan engagement and emotional responses in sports, examining various theories and findings related to fan behaviour, emotional expression, and social media influence.

Conceptual Review

Psycholinguistics: This is the main field on which our study is grounded. It examines how language and the mind interact and how emotions, thoughts, and mental states are expressed through language. In our study, psycholinguistics helps explain how fans show emotions like joy or anger through their words, punctuation, or even silence on social media.

Emotional Patterns: These are the common ways fans react to wins and losses. For example, happy or proud language after a win, and silent or negative language after a loss. It can be observed in the tone, word choices, and expressions used in social media posts.

Team Identification: It is how emotionally connected a fan feels to their football team. Fans with strong team identification are more likely to express intense emotional reactions, both positive and negative, through their language online.

Empirical Review

Mudrick, Miller, and Atkin (2016) examined how football fans use social media to react to wins and losses. Using Social Identity Theory and Impression Management, the study focused on two behaviours: BIRGing (celebrating after a win) and CORFing (withdrawing after a loss). A quasi-experiment involving 630 college students showed that highly loyal fans were more likely to post after wins, particularly on Facebook, while CORFing was less common. However, the study relied on imagined scenarios and self-reported intentions rather than real posts, and it focused only on Facebook and Twitter. It did not analyse the actual language fans used in their reactions.

Vallerand et al. (2008) explored football fans' passion using the Dualistic Model of Passion, distinguishing between harmonious and obsessive passion. Through three surveys conducted during live matches, the study found that harmonious passion produced positive emotions and healthy relationships, while obsessive passion led to anger and problematic behaviour. Although the study provides insight into emotional intensity among fans, it did not examine how these emotions are linguistically expressed, nor did it analyse online interactions. Fokwang (2009) examined football within a community development context in Bamenda, Cameroon, showing how the Ntambag Brothers Association used football to promote unity and youth engagement. Using ethnographic methods, the study demonstrated that football can shape identity and social cohesion. However, the focus was on community development rather than emotional language or online discourse.

Armstrong and Giulianotti (1997) argued that football reflects identity, politics, class, and culture, and should be taken seriously within social sciences. Drawing on multiple case studies, they showed that football can both unite and divide communities. While their work situates football within broader social structures, it does not address the psycholinguistic patterns of fan reactions in digital spaces.

The best applicable theories are: Social Identity Theory and Linguistic approaches to emotion. BIRGing and CORFing (Cialdini et al., 1976) can be used as a supportive theory.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on the following relevant theories that capture the phenomenon investigated, as explained below:

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C., 1979): It states that people feel connected to groups, like their football team. When the team wins, fans feel proud; when the team loses, they feel personally affected. This connection can be seen by what they post online.

- **Impression Management Theory (Goffman, E., 1959):** It says that people care about how others see them. On social media, fans may post happy messages after a win (to show loyalty), or stay quiet after a loss (to avoid embarrassment). This is linked to BIRGing and CORFing.

- **BIRGing and CORFing (Cialdini et al., 1976):** These are two common fan behaviours. BIRGing means showing off after a win ("We're the best!") while CORFing means stepping back after a loss ("That wasn't our day...").

- **Linguistic Approaches to Emotion (Wierzbicka, 1999):** It helps us understand how emotions show up in words, punctuation, emojis, and sentence style. These signs reveal what fans are feeling, even in the short posts they made on their social media accounts.

- **Uses and Gratifications Theory (Blumler, J. G., & Katz, E., 1974):** It explains why fans use social media. Fans post to express feelings, connect with others, or feel like they are part of a group. It helps them to process emotions (whether to celebrate or let frustration out).

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative design to explore fan communication on Facebook, focusing on how fans express emotions during football matches. The analysis centered on posts and comments before and after matches, allowing a

comprehensive view of emotional reactions, from excitement and joy to frustration, rivalry, anxiety, relief, and disappointment. Data were collected using purposive sampling, selecting 5 active Facebook pages that regularly discuss football: Fabrizio Romano (20M followers), Real Madrid C.F (131M followers), FC Barcelona - Barca Insider (533K followers), Viva Barca (6.7M followers), and The Nation of Blaugrana (556K followers). Comments were chosen based on relevance to match events and outcomes. Engagement was also considered, including: likes, reactions, replies, emotional richness, creativity, humor, sarcasm, and superstition. A total of 47 comments across four La Liga matches were analyzed to ensure a representative sample of fan reactions. Four Spanish La Liga matches were analyzed: Wins: Real Madrid 1 vs Atlético Bilbao 0, and Barcelona 4: Celta Vigo 3. Losses: Getafe 0 vs Real Madrid 1, and Leganés 0: Barcelona 1.

Matches were selected based on their popularity and fan engagement on Facebook. Match results were verified using Sky Sports football scores and fixtures to ensure accuracy. Fans' comments were observed before and after matches, capturing a wide range of emotional expressions. The focus was on how fans processed victories and defeats. Data were examined using thematic analysis, identifying patterns in language, emojis, punctuation, and sentence structures that conveyed emotions. Emphasis was placed on psycholinguistic interpretation, allowing us to understand how fans' words reflect cognitive and emotional processing of match outcomes. Categories included joy, anger, pride, frustration, rivalry, relief, and disappointment, showing the spectrum of fan experiences.

All data were collected from public Facebook pages, so individual consent was not required. User privacy and anonymity were maintained, with no personal identifiers included in the findings. This study did not capture the full range of fan experiences across the entire season, as it focused on specific matches. Emotional responses may have varied based on individual factors such as team loyalty and cultural background. Acknowledging these limitations provided a balanced view of the findings.

DATA PRESENTATION AND RESULTS
SPANISH LALIGA (WINS)
Real Madrid 1 vs Athletic Bilbao 0

Table One: Before the Match

#	Verbatim Comment	Emotions	Linguistic Features	Interpretation
1	"Ya Allah, please let Real Madrid lose their game against Atletico Bilbao today. Make the Real Madrid players feel incredibly tired and unable to perform well on the field. Let their game be a disgrace for Real Madrid as they suffer a defeat. Grant them numerous red cards during the match. Make them feel hungry and thirsty during the game, leading to disagreements and misunderstandings among the players. May what I have requested come to pass. Amen."	Humor, anxiety	rivalry, Prayer-like, conditional, exaggeration	Playful aggression; mixes superstition and imagined misfortune
2	"If the roof is closed: Madrid 1-2 Athletic club. If the roof is open, it's a 0-0 draw."	Playful, confident	Conditional, causal link	Uses superstition to feel control over outcomes
3	"If we lose today I hope Ancelotti will find his way home not with the team."	Sarcasm, frustration	Hypothetical, irony	Blames coach humorously; projects responsibility
4	"Rip Madrid. This short comment is cold and dismissive. It is a way of declaring Madrid dead"	Mockery, dismissive	Short, declarative	Declares defeat before match; rivalry expression
5	"I can foresee tears in Madrid 🤔😭😭💔😭"	Dramatic, joyful for rival's pain	Emojis, hyperbole	Exaggerated emotional response; humor in rivalry

6	"When the Titanic hit iceberg, there was little to be done to save it, its too late for Madrid. They should just wish the season to end tomorrow and start all over again, shames."	Doom, sarcasm	Metaphor, exaggeration	Dramatic imagery; shows hopelessness and humor
7	"Judging by the comments, there are so many who hate Real. I am a Real Madrid fan, but I have a lot of respect for the other teams."	Calm, respectful	Contrastive, balanced phrasing	Mature fan; acknowledges rivalry but stays polite

Source: Fabrizio Romano Facebook Page (April, 2025)

Table Two: After the Match

#	Verbatim Comment	Emotions	Linguistic Features	Interpretation
1	"In a dramatic finish, Real Madrid once again proved why they are the kings of football! A brilliant goal from Fede Valverde in the 90+3 minutes sealed a crucial victory. Athletic Club put up a strong fight, but in the end, it was Real Madrid who had the last laugh. A truly heart-pounding match Hala Madrid!"	Excitement, relief, joy	Narrative, hyperbole, praise, temporal markers	Fan celebrates last-minute win; acknowledges opponent; emotional satisfaction after fear
2	"And shout out to those Barca fans who did memes and ended up deleting them...y'all wasting your time 🤔🤔".	Teasing, happiness, rivalry	Humor, mocking, emojis	Fan mocks rivals; victory is also social dominance over opposing fans
3	"We defeated not only Atletico but also the Referee. Whatever the outcome, it would be better if Ancelotti leaves #HalaMadrid until death."	Joy, frustration, mixed	Metaphor, exaggeration, hashtag, complaint embedded	Fan celebrates win but criticizes refereeing; shows loyalty despite management concerns

4	"I won't force my children to support Real Madrid, they have the choice to either support them or leave my house 🏠."	Humor, loyalty	drama,	Conditional, exaggeration, metaphor, emoji	Shows deep fan loyalty; presents club support as part of family identity
5	"You lose, you blame coach, you win, you call Barcelona 😏. I'm always here for the tears when they come."	Teasing, humor	rivalry,	Parallelism, contrast, emoji	Fan mocks emotional reactions of all teams; highlights rivalry dynamics
6	"We defeated not only Atletico but also the Referee 🙄. Whatever the outcome, it would be better if Ancelotti leaves #HalaMadrid until death ❤️."	Anger, confusion	love,	Emoji, contradiction, metaphor	Fans can love their team deeply while criticizing leadership; shows emotional complexity
7	"I'm really tired of the way the team is playing, they are not ready to make any significant changes. Every game they play the same plan, a team that concentrates on defense and plays in a 4-4-2, its a big shame that the management of the team is the first to blame, Ancelotti. How can he play with such a plan with young players, for example when Diaz came on the pitch, the whole attack changed at once, thats the least I can say"	Fatigue, disappointment, frustration		Long, detailed, tactical language, critical	Fans are emotionally invested in team strategy; not just outcome-focused; detailed critique of management

Source: Real Madrid CF Facebook Page (April, 2025)

Barcelona 4: Celta Vigo 3
Table Three: Before the Match

#	Comment Verbatim	Emotions	Linguistic Features	Interpretation
1	"Even if it is 2-1, I want to see a massive improvement in our performance. I want to see us actually play very well with minimal mistakes. That will increase my hopes that we can put on a mind blowing performance against Madrid and Inter."	Cautious optimism, focus, patience	Conditional phrasing, repetition, emphasis, forward-looking	Fan values team improvement over immediate results; shows maturity and hope
2	"Man if we don't win two trophies this season I will be fuckn depressed for 3 months."	Anxiety, frustration, emotional overwhelm	Uses casual words, strong language, exaggeration, talks about self	Fan ties emotional wellbeing strongly to outcomes; raw, intense emotional investment

Source: FC Barcelona Facebook Page (April, 2025)

Table Four: After the Match

#	Comment Verbatim	Emotions	Linguistic Features	Interpretation
1	"Barcelona means a business this season. Flick changes were outstanding, those subs won us the game. We are winning a Treble this season."	Joy, confidence, pride	Positive adjectives, prediction, praise	Fan celebrates coach and team; strong belief in success and future glory
2	"In the first half, Celta makes Martin miserable. Martin still cant be trusted and how are we gonna cope against Remontada Fc next week?"	Critical, analytical, concern	Critique, rhetorical question, evaluative language	Fan acknowledges weaknesses despite victory; analytical focus on performance
3	"Poor performance even though you won."	Disappointment	Short, declarative, contrastive	Winning is separated from quality of play; shows high standards

4	<p>"Barcelona vs. Celta Vigo 4-3 Final A crazy match that saw one of the strongest comebacks this season! Barcelona came back from 3-1 down to a dramatic 4-3 victory in the final moments of the match. Flick's substitutions were the turning point, especially with the introduction of attacking players that completely changed the rhythm. The victory temporarily widens the gap at the top of La Liga and confirms that Barcelona never gives up. Congratulations to Barcelona on the huge and exciting victory!"</p>	<p>Excitement / thrill, Pride, Admiration, Satisfaction / joy</p>	<p>Narrative / sequential structure, Descriptive language ("crazy match," "dramatic 4-3 victory"), Exclamatory tone, Evaluative / praise language ("Flick's substitutions were the turning point"), Informal tone, Emphasis / repetition of key points</p>	<p>Narrative, praise, descriptive, reflective</p>
5	<p>" Appreciate the effort, but for heavens sake get your heads in the game and level up for the next games."</p>	<p>Constructive, firm</p>	<p>Imperative, evaluative, balanced phrasing</p>	<p>Fan encourages improvement while acknowledging effort; combines support and critique</p>
6	<p>"Flick needs to come up with a new strategy when it comes to the defense otherwise we will get murdered, teams are figuring out how to hurt us, hat tricks from Iglesias and Guirassy in less than 4 days is unacceptable."</p>	<p>Fear, concern, restlessness</p>	<p>Analytical, evaluative, negative, imperative</p>	<p>Fan warns about defensive weaknesses; urges tactical changes</p>
7	<p>"Bro we cant continue with this reckless defending this is ridiculous!! There is no way they come back if this was inter."</p>	<p>Anger, frustration, anxiety</p>	<p>Exclamatory, informal, emphasis, comparison</p>	<p>Fan expresses strong frustration; compares team performance against stronger opponents</p>

Source: FC Barcelona Facebook Page (April, 2025)

SPANISH LALIGA (LOSSES)

Getafe 0: Real Madrid 1

Table Five: Before The Match

#	Comment Verbatim	Emotions	Linguistic Features	Interpretation
1	"Real Madrid losing is the way of attracting my happiness."	Joy, rivalry, humor	Declarative, evaluative, exaggeration	Fan expresses pleasure in rival's defeat; mixes humor and hate
2	"Those predicting 1-1 will not make heaven."	Confident, humorous, playful aggression Hyperbole, imperative, joking	Hyperbole, imperative, joking	Fan encourages belief in victory; uses humor to push others' opinions
3	"Our focus is Barca winning LaLiga 🤔, we don't care."	Lighthearted, dismissive	Declarative, informal, emoji	Rival fan prioritizes own team; dismisses Madrid's matches; casual tone
4	"Getafe frustrated us, I so wish they lose, but again if they win, thats still fine."	Mild frustration, uncertainty, flexibility	Contrastive phrasing, conditional, evaluative	Fan shows mixed emotions; frustration tempered by acceptance of outcome
5	"Vamos Madrid 🤝 I know we'll destroy them."	Confidence, excitement, energy	Imperative, evaluative, emoji	Fan expresses faith and enthusiasm; pre-game optimism
6	"Real Madrid are not strong enough to beat this formidable Getafe team."	Doubt, worry, concern	Declarative, evaluative, negative	Fan expresses lack of confidence in team's strength; analytical concern
7	"If they decide to play without corruption it's going to be a draw 1:1. But if they go with tradition, it's going to	Distrust, suspicion, cynicism	Conditional, contrastive, evaluative, hypothetical	Fan believes external factors (corruption) influence outcomes; shows skepticism about fairness

be 2:1 win for them."

Source: Source: Real Madrid CF Facebook Page (April, 2025)

Table Six: After the Match

#	Comment Verbatim	Emotions	Linguistic Features	Interpretation
1	"Its sad to say but this Real Madrid is winning 🤔 this season. They will need to score at least 4 to win against Barcelona and hope that the defense holds up, which is not happening."	Frustration, disbelief, disgust Declarative, evaluative, emoji, critical	Declarative, evaluative, emoji, critical	Fan is dissatisfied despite the win; questions team's quality and defense; emoji emphasizes disgust
2	"Proud with the three points but disappointed with the play and substitutions... Where did that play from Athletic game go? Real please don't play with fans' hearts."	Mixed feelings, disappointment, emotional exhaustion	Contrastive phrasing, rhetorical question, evaluative	Fan appreciates the win but criticizes inconsistency; emotionally drained from following the team
3	" Getafe were the better team on the pitch tonight, the officials were doing everything possible for Madrid to win tonight."	Anger, suspicion, bitterness	Declarative, accusatory, evaluative	Fan believes win was unfair; expresses distrust of refereeing and bitterness
4	" I love seeing VARcelona (ex FC Barcelona) fans cry. It's my daily medicine, my weekly energy, my monthly inspiration and my yearly motivation. Their loss is the only reason Im still alive, I was born to love and enjoy the failure that they have achieved 😂😂"	Exaggerated joy, mockery, rivalry	Hyperbole, repetition, informal, humor, emoji	Fan celebrates rival's failure; uses humor and exaggeration to express intense rivalry

5	<p>"And we were hailing this team to win UCL this season. 😞. Supporters now suffer and sweat more than the players on the field. No seriousness in most of the guys on the field, no teamwork especially from the forwards. I have been saying any serious team will beat Madrid this season, and its happening. With this performance, Madrid can never win any game against Barca this season!!"</p>	<p>Disappointment, hopelessness, betrayal</p>	<p>Long, descriptive, evaluative, exclamatory, emoji</p>	<p>Fan feels tired and betrayed by team's poor performance; expresses strong sadness and despair</p>
6	<p>"I dont like the way these boys are playing, very lazy and not convincing, its time to get rid of most of them."</p>	<p>Anger, frustration, disappointment Declarative, evaluative, imperative, critical</p>	<p>Declarative, evaluative, imperative, critical</p>	<p>Fan demands immediate change; dissatisfaction with players' effort and performance</p>
7	<p>"But to be honest, as a fan of Madrid, Barca nowadays is better and we couldnt win her."</p>	<p>Sadness, humility, acceptance Declarative, honest confession, evaluative</p>	<p>Declarative, honest confession, evaluative</p>	<p>Fan acknowledges rival's superiority; mixes honesty with disappointment; shows acceptance of reality</p>

Source: Fabrizio Romano Facebook Page (April, 2025)

Leganes 0: Barcelona 1
Table Seven: Before the Match

#	Comment Verbatim	Emotions	Linguistic Features	Interpretation
1	"This Leganés team deserves to be beaten 5-0."	Overconfidence, arrogance	Declarative, evaluative, hyperbolic	Fan expects total dominance; shows strong belief in Barcelona's superiority
2	"BARCELONA FOR LIFE WERE UNSTOPPABLE."	Pride, excitement, loyalty	Capitalization for emphasis, declarative, evaluative, exclamatory	Fan expresses strong allegiance and enthusiasm for the team; conveys unwavering confidence
3	"This team always creating problem for Barcelona."	Worry, realism	caution, Declarative, evaluative, predictive	Fan acknowledges opponent's potential threat; shows measured concern despite loyalty.

Source: Viva Barca Facebook Page (April, 2025)

Table Eight: After the Match

#	Comment Verbatim	Emotions	Linguistic Features	Interpretation
1	" If you want to win the league, you have to win this kind of games. Ugly, but as valuable as the most beautiful game ever."	Satisfaction, understanding, realism	Declarative, evaluative, contrastive	Fan values results over style; shows maturity and appreciation of outcome
2	": Leganés were better tonight, FC Barcelona was just lucky."	Frustration, disappointment	Declarative, evaluative, contrastive	Fan criticizes team's performance despite winning; acknowledges opponent's strength
3	"Only the defence was good. Otherwise worst game of the season."	Frustration, disappointment	Declarative, evaluative, critical	Fan praises only one part of the team; highlights poor performance overall

4	"They want to play low block and also share the points with us 😊 useless team, this is the ugliest win I have seen and I love it."	Amusement, pride, humor	Declarative, evaluative, informal, emoji, exclamatory	Fan mocks opponent while celebrating victory; expresses enjoyment despite ugly performance
5	"What I saw today was the ugliest game of all. Credit to the referee and little luck we took 3 points."	Dissatisfaction, relief	Declarative, evaluative, explanatory	Fan acknowledges poor play but recognizes luck and officiating; mixed feelings of complaint and relief
6	"If Leganés played in the UCL, our chances of winning that trophy will be slim. What a team 😊😂 Very wicked team!"	Amusement, admiration, playfulness	Declarative, hyperbole, informal, emoji	Fan praises Leganés as a strong, tricky opponent; mixes humor with respect for their play
7	"Let's give thanks to God... My heart nearly break..."	Relief, exhaustion, gratitude	Declarative, exclamatory, unfinished thought	Fan is thankful for the result but shows emotional stress from the match

Source: The Nation of Blaugrana (April, 2025)

KEY:

Comment Verbatim: *Comments of fans as collected from social media*

Emotions, Linguistic features, Interpretation: *Analyses by the researchers*

General Findings and Emotions Shown

Comments across all the matches revealed a mixture of excitement, anger, joy, rivalry, and frustration. Many fans showed strong rivalry, sometimes turning happiness and pain into jokes or prayers. Others were deeply emotional, connecting team success to personal happiness and self-worth.

There were also critical voices, especially when fans felt their team played badly even after winning. Superstition, humour, and sarcasm appeared often, showing how fans use creativity to express stress and hope. Finally, a few comments reflected gratitude and relief, especially after tense victories.

In general, the emotions expressed were: anger and frustration about poor performances and refereeing, joy and pride in late or dramatic wins, fear and

anxiety about future matches, rivalry and mockery toward opposing teams and fans, relief and gratitude after the close of games, disappointment and sadness over poor play. Football here is more than sport, it is emotion, identity, and expression. The comments clearly show that fans live through every kick, pass, and goal with passion that reflects both love and frustration, turning ordinary matches into emotional journeys.

CONCLUSION

This study analysed Facebook fans' reactions to selected Spanish LaLiga matches in April 2025 to understand how emotions are expressed before and after wins and losses. The findings show that football fandom on social media is highly emotional and deeply personal. Fans used language to express joy, pride, frustration, anger, anxiety, rivalry, and relief, often relying on humor, exaggeration, superstition, and sarcasm. Reactions were not determined by match results alone. Even after victories, many fans expressed dissatisfaction with team performance, refereeing decisions, or coaching choices. Losses and tense wins triggered stronger emotional responses, including disappointment, exhaustion, and open criticism. Rivalry played a major role, with fans frequently mocking opposing teams and supporters as part of emotional release. Overall, the study shows that football on social media functions as an emotional space where fans negotiate identity, loyalty, and expectations. Spanish LaLiga matches during this period generated intense emotional engagement, confirming that football discourse online reflects more than sport; it reflects lived emotional experience.

Acknowledgements

The authors warmly appreciate their Research Assistants who assisted them in finalizing the research paper within record time.

Authors' Contributions

Gilbert Fossung initiated the idea of this paper and wrote the first draft, whereas Bate Arrey coordinated the data gathering and reworked it based on the comments from the reviewers. She equally assisted in data analysis while Ebune Stephan worked on the necessary literature pertaining to this work.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

There was no conflict of interest with any sources or persons from the beginning of this paper to the end of it.

Ethical clearance

There was no ethical bridge since our data were collected from public Facebook pages. The identity of the various page users remains anonymous.

External Funding Sources

The authors did not receive any external funding from any organization or individuals as the sponsor of the cost of publication of this paper.

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