

## Semantic and Socio-Cultural Analysis for Indonesian Children's Names Born in the 2000s

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### A B S T R A C T

This study aims to investigate the names and naming systems of children born in the 2000s. It focuses on the meaning of personal names and the socio-cultural shift in the name system. It reveals the parents' perspectives who lives in 21st century. This study employed a qualitative approach and a descriptive qualitative design, as the analysis would elaborate on the findings descriptively. The participants were selected based on purposive sampling. They aged between 20 to 40 years old. The instruments used in this study were observation and interviews. The parents' interview was conducted via WhatsApp chat and Google Forms with open-ended questions. The data were collected, categorized, analyzed, and concluded. Finally, it is inferred that the children's names in the 2000s have connotative and denotative meanings, which relate to courage, beauty, cleverness, and peacefulness. The sociocultural shift changes the names and, in turn, alters the identity. Most parents prefer the Arabic language to reflect the Muslim identity. The parents' perspective has shifted because they prefer to choose names with high complexity by using unfamiliar words and those that are difficult to pronounce. Javanese tradition in naming has shifted because it does not follow the teachings of the Islamic religion.

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### 1. Introduction

Naming plays an important role that cannot be separated from society. It is used to label persons, places, and other objects because people cannot communicate without names. Naming is used as an identification because it provides a unique identifier for each entity. It helps society distinguish between different entities and prevent ambiguities. Muhsyanur (2023) explains that a name is signed and attached to each individual to show their uniqueness. Moreover, naming's role is not only for labeling but also for indicating identity. The proper names are a hint at an individual's identity (Aksholakova, 2014). The personal name is used to identify a person without requiring direct inquiry. Crucial information, such as gender, kinship, geographical origin, or even religion, can be identified through names (Bodenhorn & Bruck, 2006; Jauro et al., 2013). The naming system is used to determine the clan affiliation within a society. The naming system indicates the relationships between various kinds of groupings (Harvey, 2002). As Bodenhorn & Bruck's statement suggests, personal names can reveal gender identity (feminine or masculine). For instance, the naming system in Bakossiland, in which Bakossi people are named based on their gender identity (Ngade, 2018).

Names and naming systems are not only concerned with the bearer's identity but also intimately

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related to the cultural background. Naming is closely tied to a person's cultural background, encompassing values, traditions, hopes, fears, and significant life events (Aribowo, 2019; Haili, 2017; Lyles-Scott, 2008; Wahed & Ghaleb, 2009). Naming is used to represent a specific culture because of respect. It is also used to maintain cultural heritage and ethnic identity, which are passed down from one generation to the next. Each culture has a distinct pattern that influences its naming system. Aribowo & Almasitoh (2019) also note that the family's socio-cultural background influences the process of name selection, resulting in people from different cultures having different naming systems.

Undoubtedly, the naming system has significant socio-cultural practices (Aksholakova, 2014; Haili, 2017; Kim & Lee, 2011; Lusekelo & Muro, 2018; Mphande, 2006; Notzon & Nesom, 2005; Thomson, 2015; Wahed & Ghaleb, 2009). When the name system changes, it means that certain groups' identities also change, because the name system reflects their perspective, identity, and socio-cultural context. Identity is not a constant issue, but it may change over time because of the emergence of social dynamics and multicultural adaptation (Aribowo & Herawati, 2016). Additionally, the name system can indicate not only the socio-cultural background but also the linguistic structure, such as the phonology, morphology, syntax, or even semantic processes. Personal names have semantic meanings (Awalin, 2016; Charwi, 2019; Olenyo, 2011). Mphande (2006) also explains that a name may indicate the linguistic structures and phonological processes found in the language, the position of the name's bearer in society, and the collective history and life experiences of the people surrounding the individual.

Indonesia has various name systems, including the personal name system, due to its multilingual and culturally diverse nature. Each region has its own culture, which influences the naming system's process. Aside from that, the personal name should have a meaning. Rahman (2016) emphasized that a firmly held belief is that names should have a meaning. Personal names in Indonesia support it. In the 1970s, the Indonesian name system used Javanese language names, such as *Sutomo*, *Sujana*, *Sutopo*, etc., and those names were trendy (Widodo, 2014). In that year, the Javanese people took pride in having traditional names that carried good and significant meanings. Mak (2004) explains that Javanese Muslims who do not have an Islamic name prefer to use traditional names as a naming system. Moreover, perspective, ideology, and identity can be reflected by the names system.

Several previous studies observed the names and naming system. Widodo (2013a) said that the Javanese names have form, structure, and interesting meaning. His data was taken from the naming system of the Javanese people in Surakarta, Central Java. His study explained that Javanese names had forms and meanings related to their cultural background. Then, his other study also observed the naming system of Javanese people, which has a characteristic system (distribution of vowels and consonants) (Widodo, 2013b). He discovered that the variation of vowels was more prominent in Javanese names. Aribowo and Herawati (2016) explained that their research showed that most Javanese people named their children using the Javanese language. They observed that the Javanese people in the modern era, especially in Klaten, Central Java, use the Arabic language to address children, thereby showing their identity.

Previous researches have focused on pre-2000 Javanese naming patterns; however, the influence of globalization and digital access on naming has not been systematically analyzed. Furthermore, the phenomenon of naming patterns in Javanese children born in the 2000s is crucial to discuss, as people live in the modern 21<sup>st</sup> century. This study examines the perspectives of parents on naming their children born in the 2000s. Consequently, this study aims to investigate the semantic meanings of personal names in the 2000s and how the socio-cultural context influences the name system of the 2000s.

## 2. Methods

This study focused on the naming systems of children born in the 2000s. The naming system reflected the perspective, identity, and socio-cultural aspects of a particular group while indicating the linguistic structure. Consequently, this study analyzed the issue of the naming system for Javanese children's names in the 2000s, which necessitated the use of qualitative research as the approach. The qualitative approach was conducted because the issue or problem needs to be explored (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Moreover, the qualitative approach was characterized by the data being presented in word form, rather than in numeric form. Qualitative research data were collected in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Furthermore, this study employed a descriptive qualitative method because it described the data on the name system in the 2000s. This study aims to identify and analyze the name system based on its socio-cultural and linguistic structure. Consequently, this study employed descriptive qualitative research methods.

This study utilized two data sources. The primary data was collected by questionnaires. It was collected from Google Form with open-ended questions. There were 125 children's names collected. The secondary data was collected by family cards. There were 129 names collected. The total number of data sources was 254 children's names. The participants were selected based on purposive sampling. It provided important information by choosing the participants, which other choices could be set up (Taherdoost, 2018). The parents were chosen as participants because they understood the meaning of the name system for their children. They were parents who were aged 20 to 40 years old. Those ages were chosen because the parents had children aged 0 to 15 years old. All the participants lived in Surabaya, East Java. Parents who lived in Surabaya were chosen because Surabaya was the second-largest city after the capital, and it was a modern city. The parents' education began with secondary school and progressed to bachelor's and master's degrees. They worked as housewife, administrators, teachers, and lecturers. The participants' religion was Islamic because this study wants to observe the baby born tradition which is not in line with the religion. The children of the participants were born from 2000 to 2021.

The data in this study consisted of personal names with multiple structural components. Each name consisted of at least two structures: a given name and a surname. In some instances, names include three components, incorporating a middle name as an additional identifier. Certain entries contain four components, indicating a more complex and extended naming structure. A comprehensive analysis of naming patterns was conducted by examining the structural composition of given names, middle names, and surnames. The analysis extended beyond identifying the presence of these components to understanding their functions in personal names.

Observation was used in data collection. It was conducted to classify parents who had children born in the 2000s. This study only analyzed parents aged 20 to 40 years, based on their classification. The data collection was taken in December 2020. Then, the instrument of data collection was a questionnaire with open-ended questions. The survey was conducted online through WhatsApp chats and Google Forms. The participants had to answer 12 questions. Those questions covered the parents' age, their educational background, the child's date of birth, the child's name, and the meaning of the child's name, among other details. The questions in WhatsApp chatting and Google forms were the same, such as "What is your child's name?", "What is the meaning of your child's name?", etc. A total of 18 participants were contacted via WhatsApp, and 125 participants completed the questionnaire using Google Form<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, several steps were taken to analyze the data. First, the data was collected

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<sup>2</sup> <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1HUv-Kvg-AX-9rclimdmFNJjLDBMwZEsYgxMzouzzX0Q/edit?usp=sharing>

from Google Forms, WhatsApp chats, and Family cards. Second, the data were classified by gender, distinguishing between male names and female names. Third, the data were classified based on the meaning of the names. The classification used the semantic tagging based on USAS tagset which was classified manually. Finally, the data were analyzed in relation to the research questions regarding the semantic aspects of personal names and the socio-cultural aspects of the name system.

### 3. Results and Discussion

In this section, the researcher presents the findings on the name system for Indonesian children born in the 2000s, which were collected during the data collection process.

#### 3.1. The meaning of personal names semantically

A total of 254 names were collected from the family card, Google Form, and WhatsApp chats. It was found that the names were not only names that related to males and females, but also had meaning. Based on the parents' interview, the Islamic names chosen by the parents were in the Arabic language. The tables below list names using Islamic names classified semantically based on USAS Tagset.

**Table 1.** Male Names

Name	Meaning	USAS Tag	Category (USAS)
<i>Abrisam, Naufal, Shaquille</i>	Handsome	O4.2+	Appearance and physical properties
<i>Zein, Tsabit, Ahnaf, Azzamy</i>	Strong	O4.5+	Physical strength
<i>Adhim, Akbar</i>	Great	A5.1+	Size, magnitude
<i>Afzam Afkar Annafis</i>	Wise	X9.1+	Knowledge, wisdom
<i>Hamizan Miyas Nabhan</i>	Intelligent	X9.1+	Knowledge, intelligent
<i>Bariul, Danish</i>			
<i>Asad, Azlan</i>	lion	L2	Living creature: Animals
<i>Al Arsy</i>	throne	G2.1	Government, politics
<i>Syabil</i>	star	W1	Astronomy
<i>Rasydan</i>	guide	S8+	Helping
<i>Reihan, Khairullah</i>	God's gift	A1.5.2+	Valuable thing
<i>Muhammad, Ibrahim</i>	prophet	S9	Religion and the supernatural
<i>Fatih</i>	conqueror	S7.1+	Authority
<i>Mursyid</i>	teacher	G1.2	Social roles
<i>Amir, Khaizuran</i>	leader	G1.2	Social roles

**Table 2.** Female Names regarded the abstract qualities

Name	Meaning	USAS Tag	Category (USAS)
<i>Misha, Hasna</i>	beautiful	O4.2+	Appearance and physical properties
<i>Zaafarani</i>	fragrant	O4.3	Smell
<i>Farhannisa, Farhana</i>	happy	E4.1+	Emotion
<i>Azarine, Mazna</i>	shining	O4.1	Light
<i>Almira, Izzah</i>	precious	A1.3+	Valued

<i>Shifa</i>	medicine	B2	Drugs and medical treatment
<i>Ainin</i>	spring	T1.3	Time: Seasons
<i>Zalfa</i>	jewel	I1.1	Money & valuables
<i>Elzahira, Azzahra, Zahro, Naura</i>	flower	L3	Plants
<i>Dinah</i>	love	E2+	Affection, Liking
<i>Aisyah</i>	wife of Prophet Muhammad	S4	Kinship
<i>Maryam</i>	mother of Prophet Isa	S4	Kinship
<i>Shifwa</i>	best friend	G2.2	Social roles (status)
<i>Syarifah</i>	honorable noblewoman	G2.2	social roles (status)
<i>Ummi</i>	mother	S4	Kinship terms

Furthermore, the tables below list names in various foreign languages, including German, American, and Turkish, for male names. At the same time, the female names were used in other foreign languages, such as German, Japanese, Persian, and Turkish.

**Table 7.** Male Names with other foreign languages (German, American, Turkish)

Name	Meaning
<i>Gavyn, Ghavin</i>	white eagle
<i>Rainar</i>	leader
<i>Renaissance</i>	enlightenment
<i>Alexander</i>	helper of mankind
<i>Zeki</i>	intelligent

**Table 8.** Female Names with other foreign languages (German, Japanese, Persian, Turkish)

Name	Meaning
<i>Latisha</i>	happiness
<i>Shaqueena</i>	charismatic
<i>Yuna</i>	soft
<i>Aura</i>	light
<i>Ailsa</i>	inhabitant of island

The names above had a connotative meaning, which was included in the semantic aspect (Leech, 1981: p. 9). Personal names are not only used to identify the bearers, male or female, but also have a denotative meaning, and the reason why those names are given to the bearers. Regarding the meaning, personal names have connotative and denotative meanings. To understand what names mean, we must get beyond the debate itself, asking what they are as well as what they signify (Bodenhorn & Bruck, 2006).

### 3.2. *The socio-cultural induces the naming system*

There were several aspects in the socio-cultural which induced the names system. Those names reflected the identity, gender, and ritual of the name system.

#### 3.2.1. *Names as an identity*

A total of 125 parents were interviewed regarding the naming system for their children born in the 2000s. The data collection revealed that the majority of parents gave their children Arabic names. The parents had the perspective that their religion was Islamic, in which case, as Muslim people, they had to choose or use Islamic names by using the Arabic language. The use of a name with religious content is a way to show their Islamic identity (Aribowo, 2015). It is similar to Aribowo's statement that the parents explained their purpose for giving the children names in the Arabic language to show their identity as Muslims. When the parents were Muslim, they gave their children names based on the Islamic names using the Arabic language. Moreover, after the Arabic language, some other parents also used the old Javanese, Sanskrit, and Indonesian languages. Similar to the Arabic language, the parents wanted their children to comprehend their identity as Javanese and Indonesian people. The parents' perspective, by giving their children Javanese and Indonesian names, was that they wanted them not to forget from whom they came.

Regarding Javanese and Indonesian names, the parents did not choose those languages for the complete names. The parents would absolutely combine those languages with Arabic to form complete names. The proper names are a hint symbol of identity (Aksholakova, 2014). Whether the parents chose Arabic, Javanese, or Indonesian as the language for their children's names, they wanted to show their children's identity through their names.

#### 3.2.2. *Names from a gender perspective*

Regarding the names used in prayer, they were also used to understand the gender perspective. As Bodenhorn & Bruck's statement suggests, personal names can reveal gender identity (feminine or masculine). The parents chose the name for their son, which reflected the masculinity. The names were *Azlan*, or *Asad*, which means lion. *Wiraraja*, *Narendra*, or *Rahardian* means a king, and *Khaizuran*, *Armagan*, *Emir*, or *Amir* has the meaning of a leader, while *Fatih* has the meaning of a conqueror. The parents chose those names because of their meaning. The lion was described as strong, while the king and the leader were defined as those who led the people. The parents chose those names because they were identical to masculinity. The parents' perspective was that males were equally strong and also as leaders. The parents chose a name for their daughter that reflected their feminist values. The names were *Elzahira*, *Azzahra*, *Naura*, *Kahiyang*, *Zahro*, or *Nisrina*, which means flower. *Hasna* or *Jelita* means beautiful, and *Rashiqah* or *Carissa* means elegant. Flowers, beautiful and elegant were identified with feminism. The parents' perspective was the female regarding elegance and beauty, so they gave their children names with those names. On the other hand, several parents had a different perspective on naming their children. The feminist names were not used for female children. The parents wanted their daughters to be strong and brave. Those names were *Khanzha*, meaning "brave woman," and *Hanifah*, meaning "strong woman." It meant that the gender perspective regarding the names has shifted.

#### 3.2.3. *Names as a prayer*

The majority of parents gave their children Arabic names because they believed a name could serve as a prayer. They hoped the name would help the child gain the qualities reflected in its meaning.

Naming was an expression of wishes or hopes for their children. Parents often preferred names as wishes or prayers in Arabic, as they considered the language of the Holy Qur'an to be the guidance for Muslims. From their perspective, the language of the Qur'an was the most beautiful in the world, and they wanted to give their children meaningful names. Besides being the language of the Qur'an, Arabic is also used for prayer by Muslims. Therefore, by giving their children Islamic names, parents believed that they and their children would receive God's blessing. In addition to viewing names as prayers, some parents also used other foreign languages, such as Japanese, Persian, Urdu, Turkish, German, Greek, and English. These parents chose names whose meanings could be incorporated into prayer. However, these foreign languages were usually not used for the full name; instead, they were combined with Arabic, with the foreign language as the first name and Arabic as the middle or last name. The arrangement of Arabic and foreign names depended on the parents' wishes.

#### 3.2.4. *Ritual in the names system*

A total of 125 parents were interviewed regarding traditions, such as the ritual of giving their children born in the 2000s names. The data collection revealed that most parents did not observe the tradition of giving their children a name. When their children were born, the parents gave them their names directly because they had already prepared them. When the parents were not ready for the name after the children were born, they would give the name and conduct the *Aqiqah* ceremony. It was the activity that was conducted by the parents after their children were born, and gave them a name too. The parents preferred to conduct the *aqiqoh* rather than other rituals because it followed the Islamic tradition. Then, only a few parents conducted the tradition, such as making red porridge (*bubur merah*) or a rice box with chicken and vegetables inside (*brokohan*). Those parents still conducted it because they still followed the Javanese tradition or their family tradition. The parents conducted the tradition after the children were born. The majority of parents gave their children's names themselves. On the other hand, a few children were named by their parents and grandparents.

#### 3.2.5. *Socio-cultural shift*

The sociocultural shift meant a change in ideology, perspective, tradition, and identity. One notable aspect of the sociocultural shift is the naming system. The naming system, especially for personal names, has undergone significant changes due to the impact of socio-cultural shifts. It can be seen that the personal names of people born in the 1960s to 1970s were often identical to Javanese names. In the 1970s, the Indonesian naming system primarily used the Javanese language, with names such as Sutomo, Sujana, and Sutopo, which were popular at the time (Widodo, 2014). They wanted to showcase their Javanese identity, and the majority had only one word (mononym) for their names. Then, in the 1980s and 1990s, the naming system shifted, and the majority of parents gave their children names that combined elements from Javanese and Indonesian languages, such as Ayu Febriani, Sinta Agustina, and *Adi Julianto*. Those names from the 1980s to 1990s did not contain a single word, but the majority turned out to be two words. Those parents mostly gave their children names related to the month when they were born, such as Febriani, meaning the child born in February, Agustina, meaning the child born in August, and Julianto, meaning the child born in July.

In the 21st century, technology has become an integral part of human life. It affected the naming system for children who were born in the 2000s. The majority of parents chose names for their children that incorporated elements from various foreign languages, including Arabic, Japanese, German, Greek, Turkish, and Persian. There is a relationship between the language and social life in the basic characteristics of the personal name (Bean, 1980). Those parents also looked for names and meanings

on the internet because they could easily access it to find names, especially Islamic names and their meanings in foreign languages. Modern families prefer to give their children names with high complexity, in which those names use new words or unfamiliar vocabulary for common people (Aribowo & Herawati, 2016). The parents sought unique names for their children; the general public rarely heard these names. Consequently, other people found it difficult to pronounce those names because they were rarely heard, and the names were also derived from foreign languages. Those names were not found and used by previous generations. Then, the mononym was not used for children's names in the 1970s, but it was in the 2000s. The parents preferred to use two to five words in one name. Furthermore, the socio-cultural shift induced a change in the name system. It automatically shifted the identity of the names' bearers. Identity is not a constant issue, but it may change over time because of the emergence of social dynamics and multicultural adaptation (Aribowo & Herawati, 2016). The socio-cultural shift in the names system not only changed the identity of the names' bearers but also the tradition of giving names to children.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study concludes that the naming system for children who were born in the 2000s has a semantically meaningful meaning. The personal names related to nouns have a connotative meaning, while the adjective has a denotative meaning to reflect the characteristics. It is applied to the name's bearer to have those characteristics. The meaning chosen by the parents holds great significance, and it also serves as a prayer for the name bearer. The meaning of those names semantically relates to courage, beauty, cleverness, and peacefulness. Moreover, the socio-cultural shift impacts the naming system for children born in the 2000s. The socio-cultural shift changes the names and, in turn, alters the identity. The majority of children in the 2000s had their parents choose their names by using the Arabic language, which can reflect their identity as Muslims. Consequently, religion influenced the naming system, which was used to convey identity and social status. Then, the parents' perspective shifted because they preferred to choose names with high complexity. Those names contain unfamiliar words, which can be difficult to pronounce because they are rarely heard and often consist of two to five syllables. Javanese tradition has shifted, with the old tradition of giving names, such as making red porridge (*bubur merah*) or a rice box (*brokohan*), being abandoned by most people. It has shifted because it is not in accordance with the teachings of the Islamic religion.

This research is able to contribute to the onomastics and sociolinguistics because it reveals the naming pattern in 21<sup>st</sup> century and also it enhances our understanding of parents' perspectives in the modern era. What the semantic and socio-cultural beyond the children's name who were born in 2000s. On the other hand, this research only reveals the semantic and socio-cultural analysis of the participants who are Muslim. However, the researcher suggests that the next scholars discuss the name system with non-Muslim participants. There will be a future study discussing the Muslim and non-Muslim parents' perspectives on giving their children's names.

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