

# Kanjuruhan Disaster, Exploring Indonesia Mismatch Management Football Match

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**Abstract.** The Kanjuruhan disaster (1<sup>st</sup> October, 2022), which resulted in the deaths of some 135 people, is perhaps the darkest moment in Indonesian football history. The riots broke out after a match between Arema FC and Persebaya in the top-tier of the Indonesian domestic league, at Arema's home stadium, Kanjuruhan Stadium. The Arema FC supporters, angry at their team's 2:3 defeat stormed the field and thus triggered confrontations with the police. In contravention of FIFA policy, tear gas was subsequently fired into the grandstands. The use of tear gas is regarded as being the main cause of the deaths in the stadium. This research utilizes a case study approach to comprehend, explore and elaborate on the phenomena under investigation. Through data collected via interviews, documentation, direct observation and physical artifacts, the study concludes that the Kanjuruhan disaster is an outcome of poor football governance in Indonesia, wherein the Indonesian Football Association (PSSI) neglects and violates football match regulations. These violations have led to subpar football standards, including the lack of factual stadium verification, misuse of tear gas by the police, overcrowding and incompetent match organizing committees.

## 1 Introduction

Indonesian football has long-been marked by violence and mismanagement (Fuller & Junaedi, 2017). The already violent trajectory of Indonesian football, however, took a turn for the worse with the events of 1<sup>st</sup> October 22, when 135 fans lost their lives at the Arema FC stadium, Kanjuruhan, after a match against bitter rivalries, Persebaya, from the nearby city of Surabaya. Two police officers were also killed in the violence. Many commentators regard this event as the darkest moment in Indonesian football history. It was the worst stadium disaster since the Port Said (in Egypt) violence which resulted in 74 deaths.

The match took place in Liga 1, the top-tier football competition in Indonesia, between two fierce rivals—Persebaya from Surabaya, the capital of East Java province, and Arema FC from Malang, located 150 km away. Matches at Kanjuruhan Stadium always attract significant interest from supporters, with a stadium seating capacity of 38,056 spectators. Along with the West Java derby involving Persija and Bandung, the East Java derby of Persebaya and Arema, are two of the most anticipated matches of the Liga 1 season. Owing to the intense rivalry between Persebaya and Arema, Persebaya fans, known as Bonek, were not permitted to attend the game on 1<sup>st</sup> October at Arema's stadium.

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For the match on 1<sup>st</sup> October, however, more tickets were sold than the stadium's capacity. Various sources have reported that 42,516 tickets were sold; while data from the Malang Regency Revenue Service stated that 42,906 tickets were sold out of 43,000 tickets printed, which resulted in overcrowding at the stadium. The above-capacity crowd was one of the factors in the scale of the tragedy.

Persebaya's victory over Arema FC marked their first away win against their rivals in 23 years. The 2:3 defeat triggered intense emotions among the home fans, some of whom were in 'standing sections' which are located between pitch and the grand stand (known in Indonesian as tribune). When the final whistle was blown, Arema FC supporters invaded the pitch, which constituted a violation of football match regulations. Although this is forbidden, it is common for pitch invasions to occur in the first and second tiers of Indonesian football. Based on observations from the Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) footage of Kanjuruhan Stadium, the initial wave of spectators entering onto the field originated from the standing sections[2], [3].

The police and even the military, despite FIFA regulations prohibiting their presence at professional football matches, attempted to prevent supporters from entering the field. The police fired tear gas into the crowd, causing panic among the fans. Many ran towards the exit gates. Their exit or escape from the stadium, however, was hindered owing to the closure of Gate 13. The stair well leading to Gate 13 became a deadly trap due to the mass pile-up obstructed by the tear gas, making it difficult for them to breathe [4]. Why this gate was locked shut is one of the main questions of investigations into the disaster.

The use of tear gas in football stadium security has been strictly prohibited by FIFA due to its serious risk to the safety of spectators [5]. Article 19, letter (b) of FIFA Stadium Safety and Security explicitly states that tear gas is forbidden to be used inside or outside stadia. The firing of tear gas causes panic and leads to people pushing and shoving, experiencing oxygen shortage, being trampled upon and other actions that can ultimately result in the loss of life. The Kanjuruhan tragedy echoes the dark history of two of the worst football tragedies also triggered by the use of tear gas, namely the National Stadium Tragedy in Peru in 1964 and the Accra Sports Stadium Tragedy in Ghana in 2001[6]–[8].

Football matches in Indonesia have a history of intense rivalry and the passionate support of fans for their clubs often involves acts loosely described as football hooliganism. Incidents of football hooliganism in Indonesia, marked by violent behavior and clashes among supporters, have been a subject of interest in football studies, especially in the context of Indonesia [9]. Historically, Indonesia has experienced many violent incidents before, after and during football matches, necessitating an investigation into the root causes and potential solutions[9].

This research aims to explain the underlying factors that led to the disaster at Kanjuruhan, as well as provide insights into the governance and security of football in Indonesia.

## **2 Literature Review**

In contemporary Indonesia, football is arguably the most fiercely contested cultural product. It reflects the intersection of mainstream politics, identity politics, negotiations of heteronormative masculinity and serves as a playground for religious authorities and youth managed by a wide spectrum of thugs[10], [11]. Football has become the most popular sport in Indonesia and an integral part of the community's culture. It is everywhere, from the streets, bars, narrow alleys, to crowded and grand stadiums, as well as dilapidated and empty places in the city[12].

Football fandom encompasses various aspects, including the presence of ultra-groups, referring to more loyal and dedicated fans who have organized patterns of mobilization

characterized by choreography, rituals, and chants that unite supporters during matches. The image of football in Indonesia, however, is not free from issues of corruption, violence and mismanagement[9]. Some football matches are even moved to undisclosed locations or played behind closed doors. The domestic league often becomes a fierce battleground between rival cities with fans who articulate their own regional identities[13].

Football hooliganism itself has long been a major area of interest in football studies as an ongoing global conflict. The term ‘post-fan’ or hooligan refers to the identity of a group of fanatical supporters as sovereign rulers closely linked to their sense of autonomy, that is, the ability to make decisions for themselves rather than being influenced by others or told what to do, and regularly seeks to manipulate, disrupt, or evade security regimes[14]. Other research shows that the strength of bonds among fanatical fandom is reported to be highly cohesive and strong enough to support pro-group extreme behaviors, including self-sacrifice and inter-group violence[15].

However, the problem lies in the disproportionate focus of research on this topic on a small portion of fans, particularly neglecting other aspects of football culture that shape the lives of many other kinds of fans[14]. Several studies have explored the phenomenon of mass violence or hooliganism in various countries, highlighting underlying factors and their social implications. For instance, Frosdick and Marsh (2013) found that the nature and level of football-related violence are influenced by different historical, social, economic, political and cultural factors[16]. Meanwhile, Spaaij (2006) emphasized the need to consider other dimensions of football culture that impact the majority of fans[14], [17].

The violence displayed by sports supporters around the stadium and sometimes far from the stadium is mostly carried out by young people. In the top-tier German football league during the period 2011-2015, matches were associated with violence among males in the age group of 18-39, including acts of misconduct and attacks on police officers[18]. Contrary to the common perception, supporters’ violent behavior does not entirely conform to the logic of social determinism, which states that aggressive and violent behavior exhibited by some fans is mainly influenced by social and contextual factors, as mentioned by Frosdick and Marsh (2013)[19], [20].

Hooliganism is often carried out by young people in the process of identity formation and intergroup competition, where these young individuals have not fully internalized the role and status of adults who can control themselves, and their behavior is related to the logic of intergroup competition and identity formation. This phase is referred to as the psychosocial latency period, which is a transitional phase in individual development.

While both concepts of social determinism and psychosocial latency are relevant for understanding the development of football hooliganism and violence in crowds, factors such as social anomie contribute to the development of violence[20], where norms and rules that usually regulate behavior become weak or absent, leading to an environment where violence and aggressive behavior can more easily occur, such as in subcultures subject to disproportionate policing or indiscriminate security measures[21].

Indeed, the moral context is not directly related to studying football hooliganism. Instead, it is more important to evaluate the following tasks: careful prevention of aggressive and dangerous behavior; stopping such behavior to minimize its effects; enforcing preventive sanctions that are firm, consistent, and effective based on the law (by the severity), such as criminal legal procedures (imprisonment or fines), civil legal procedures (financial compensation for institutions or victims), and administrative legal procedures (restrictions on stadium entry)[22].

Not only in Indonesia but on a global scale, football clashes generally involve confrontations between opposing supporters and clashes with police and security forces[7]–[9], [16], [23]. The “show-of-force” policing approach often exacerbates the riots and disturbances[9], [21]. Therefore, addressing aggression and dangerous behavior in football

requires not only prevention, neutralization, and consistent and effective sanctions by relevant laws[21]. The Indonesian police force is often regarded as being corrupt, violent and ineffective in dealing with security issues.

In their book, Pearson and Stott (2016) mentioned that the availability of appropriate and structural crowd control technology systems designed to prevent violence or disorderly behavior is crucial. Among the various causes of disasters in stadiums, for example, some are attributed to factors such as a lack of information about disaster mitigation, amateur actions by organizers and security personnel in managing potential disasters, insufficient stadium architecture to handle disasters, and a lack of medical facilities in emergencies[21].

However, solely referring to standards of adequacy, stadium reconfiguration or adding surveillance systems, or implementing collective prevention efforts, is not a simple matter but rather requires police legitimacy among the masses or security intervention legitimacy, such as two-way communication between law enforcement and spectators before the match starts, there needs to be an increase in communication, interaction, and involvement among fellow police officers themselves[24].

### **3 Methodology**

This research employs a case study method. The term “case” refers to an occurrence or event which can be either very simple or complex. Robert Stake (1994) describes a case as a “bounded system,” a system that does not stand alone[25]. In essence, it is difficult to understand a case without considering other cases. Other parts work integratively and systematically within the system. Since it does not stand alone, a case can only be understood when the researcher also understands other cases.

As a case study, this research aims to deeply understand the phenomenon, even exploring and elaborating on it. According to Robert K. Yin (1994), it is not enough for case study questions to ask what, how, and why. The what questions are meant to obtain descriptive knowledge, the how questions for explanatory knowledge, and the why questions to obtain causal knowledge. Robert K. Yin (1994) emphasizes the use of how and why questions because both questions are considered highly appropriate for obtaining in-depth knowledge about the phenomenon being studied[26]. Additionally, the form of the questions will determine the strategy used to gather data. However, on the other hand, the validity of the research results needs to be verified through examination by others, making adherence to mechanisms that ensure accuracy in data collection and analysis crucial [27].

This research adopts a case study approach, analyzing the Kanjuruhan Tragedy as a complex event within a broader system. Data collection methods include in-depth interviews, documentary reviews, direct observation, and analysis of physical artifacts. This study aims to answer not only what happened but also how and why, using descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory questions to achieve a comprehensive understanding. This approach allows the researcher to comprehensively understand complex events and make meaningful contributions to the research.

## **4 Findings and Discussion**

### **4.1 Understanding Football Competitions in Indonesia**

As the most popular sport in Indonesia, football matches are almost always filled with spectators. By using FIFA’s statutory regulations, football competitions are officially under the authority of the Indonesian Football Association (PSSI), making all football matches the absolute responsibility of PSSI.

The history of football competitions in Indonesia, from the establishment of PSSI until the present, has seen three models of competitions. These three models are competitions conducted for professional clubs, semi-professional clubs, and amateur clubs. Amateur football competitions were held from the establishment of PSSI in 1930 until 1979. In the subsequent development of PSSI, two models of competitions, semi-professional and amateur, were organized. Both competition models operated under separate concepts and were coordinated by their respective bodies or competition sectors. The Perserikatan competition was managed through the amateur sector, while Galatama was run as a semi-professional competition.

The merger of the Galatama and Perserikatan competitions resulted in the establishment of the Liga Indonesia competition, which took place from 1994 to 2008. The name of this competition changed according to the main sponsor supporting the competition each year, and its management remained semi-professional.

Starting in 2008, PSSI declared that the two top-tier competitions in Indonesia would be professionally managed, namely the Liga Super Indonesia and Liga Divisi Utama, as the highest level of football competition in Indonesia. Clubs competing in Division I, II, and III were placed at lower levels, assuming they were managed as amateur clubs.

In 2017, the top-tier football competition in Indonesia officially changed its name back to Liga 1. The name changes also applied to Divisi Utama (becoming Liga 2) and Liga Nusantara (becoming Liga 3). The competition operator also changed from PT Liga Indonesia (LI) to PT Liga Indonesia Baru (LIB).

Before the competition begins, PSSI must conduct club verification according to AFC licensing standards. Football clubs competing in Liga 1 must meet five standard aspects: legality, financial, personnel and administration, infrastructure and sporting (youth development). The infrastructure criteria that clubs must fulfill include having a stadium approved for AFC competitions, stadium security certification, evacuation plans, training facilities, player development training facilities, and stadiums complying with FIFA regulations.

PSSI claims to have implemented the AFC licensing policy for all professional football clubs since 2009. However, this claim by PSSI cannot be accounted for. As evidence, in the AFC Club Licensing 2020, only seven football clubs out of eighteen Liga 1 contestants in 2021-2022 met the criteria. The seven clubs are Bali United, Persipura Jayapura, Bhayangkara FC, Borneo FC, Persib Bandung, Arema FC, and Persija Jakarta. Despite eleven football clubs failing to obtain AFC Club Licensing, the football competition was still carried out, and these eleven clubs were still allowed to participate.

The verification process of stadiums is also questionable. Reports suggest that PT LIB did not conduct factual verification of Kanjuruhan Stadium for Liga 1 in 2022/2023. Consequently, the claim that Arema FC's stadium is eligible for AFC Club Licensing 2020 cannot be justified, leading to the tragedy at Kanjuruhan Stadium.

Other findings indicate that the last verification of Kanjuruhan Stadium was on February 6, 2020. This finding means that Kanjuruhan Stadium in Malang does not have stadium certificate documents, evacuation plans, ground rules, and field availability letters.

## **4.2 Football Match Mismanagement**

The Kanjuruhan Tragedy began with the misleading verification Kanjuruhan Stadium before the Liga 1 football competition. The poor mitigation measures further allowed the tragedy to occur. The Chief of Police of Malang City had requested the organizing committee of Arema FC to change the Liga 1 football match's schedule to 3:00 p.m. instead of 8:00 p.m., as matches at night posed higher risks.

The Chief of Police of Malang City asked the organizing committee of Arema FC to send a letter to PT LIB regarding the schedule change, considering the higher risks associated with nighttime matches. PT LIB's CEO, however, rejected the police's request and ordered Arema FC's management to stick to the original schedule of the Liga 1 2022/2023 match between Arema FC and Persebaya.

Due to the rejected request for a schedule change, the Malang Police Chief requested additional assistance from Police Security Forces (PAM) and the military. The security forces, which originally numbered 1,700 personnel, were increased to 2,034 personnel.

According to the police's admission, the security preparations for the Arema FC vs. Persebaya match had been underway since September 20-30, 2022 (10 days). For seven consecutive days, the Malang Police conducted surveys at Kanjuruhan Stadium, asking for all stones and breakable items to be removed. Leaving any stones or breakable items could create opportunities for conflicts and stone-throwing. The Malang Police also conducted crowd control training for various scenarios, and simulations for all situations, both at the Malang Police field, around Kanjuruhan Stadium and inside Kanjuruhan Stadium.

Before the match started, there was heavy rain in Malang City, resulting in the security briefing for the police in the stands being conducted at 3:45 p.m. This made the match even riskier for potential disturbances to occur.

Two days before the Arema FC vs. Persebaya match, the match commissioner from PSSI only conducted a stadium condition check but did not inspect the security plan. On September 30, 2022, a technical meeting was held. Still, the security officer only explained the number of security personnel without providing detailed information about the placement of security officers, evacuation plan, and security mechanism by the police and army. At the same time, it was the police who prepared the security plan.

Poor communication among all parties, including PSSI, PT LIB, organizing committee, Arema FC club, police, match commissioner, and security officer, occurred before the match started.

As the Arema FC vs. Persebaya match began, everything seemed peaceful and orderly upon entering the stadium until kick-off at 8:00 p.m. There were no disturbances. Arema FC supporters taunted Persebaya players, but during the first half-time break, there were about two or three incidents of commotion in tribunes 12 and 13. The security forces promptly handled these disturbances.

In the second half Persebaya scored their third goal. Arema FC intensified their attacks on Persebaya's goal but couldn't score. Until the final whistle, Arema FC couldn't add a goal and had to accept defeat. This was when the tragedy began to unfold. After the whistle was blown, the Arema players bowed the heads in disappointment. Meanwhile, the Arema coach and team manager approached the east tribune, gesturing an apology to the supporters. Suddenly, a supporter from the south tribune boldly approached two Arema FC players, Sergio Silva, and Adilson Maringa.

Some supporters then tried to go to the field to express their disappointment to Arema players. An Arema FC player, John Alfarizie, tried to calm the fans and implored them not to invade the pitch. But the more supporters entered the field, the more the situation became chaotic because supporters came from various sides of the stadium to express their disappointment.

Various objects were thrown onto the field by Arema FC fans and the situation spiraled out of control. More and more police entered the stadium and tried to quell the growing unrest. The players were then escorted to the dressing room by the police. However, the situation continued to worsen. The security forces tried to force the Arema FC supporters back to the stands, but they resisted. Eventually, the police resorted to using tear gas. The Kanjuruhan tragedy had begun.

The types of weapons used by the police to launch tear gas were smooth-bore long barrels (with ammunition caliber 37/38), Super Pro flash balls (caliber 44), and Anti-Riot AGL (ammunition caliber 38). The tear gas ammunition used was from the supply dated back to 2019 that had already expired. Before the match, the match commissioner knew that the police were carrying tear gas weapons. Unfortunately, the match commissioner did not report this information. The match commissioner also stated that they were unaware of FIFA regulations' prohibition of tear gas usage.

There were 30 rounds of ammunition from 10 shots fired by the police, as seen in the video. Additionally, it is estimated that tear gas was fired inside the stadium around 45 times. The video shows 27 shots, and 18 others were heard. The violence committed by the authorities occurred between 10:08:35-10:08:36 p.m. A soldier struck one of the supporters who was carrying a stick to the right of the players' dressing room. Another military member kicked a supporter running towards the southeast of the field at 10:08:42-10:08:43 p.m. At the same time, three soldiers pulled and struck a supporter with a stick. Violence was also carried out by two military personnel in front of the southern goal from 10:08:43-10:08:57 p.m. At 10:09:20 p.m., an officer brought down one supporter and took them to the edge of the field.

At 10:00 p.m., all exit doors of the economic tribune were open, causing the spectators to run and trample each other. Spectators in the tribune ran to avoid the tear gas. The exit flow of supporters from the tribune to outside the stadium appeared smooth at doors 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, and 14. However, a different situation occurred at doors 3, 7, 9, 10, 12, and 13. The crowded mass of spectators caused congestion, making it impossible for people to pass through door 13, which ultimately became the death door.

At 10:12:20-10:12:21 p.m., a police officer from the left side of the southern goal fired tear gas again towards the tribune. One tear gas round fell and exploded right at the left end of the entrance of door 13. The tear gas shot entered the staircase of door 13, causing panic and making the crowd squeeze together to try to exit through door 13.

One person getting trapped at the exit of door 13 resulted in people being stuck, and with the continuous push from the back, the mass became horizontally piled up, crushing each other, and struggling to breathe. Many of the victims were young teenagers and children. Many of the victims were teenage girls, contrasting with the general perception that the overwhelming majority of fans who attend the games are male.

Outside the stadium, players, and officials of Persebaya were attacked by supporters. There was stone-throwing and other violent acts, including obstructing the Baracuda armoured vehicle which was used to rescue the players and officials of Persebaya, causing them to be trapped inside the Baracuda for almost 1.5 hours. Media coverage of the Kanjuruhan Tragedy has largely ignored this aspect of the incident.

The use of tear gas in the match between Arema FC and Persebaya was part of the security plan by the police, which, in fact, had been prohibited according to the FIFA and PSSI Safety and Security Regulations in 2021. However, the design of football match security in Indonesia, initiated by PSSI in collaboration with the Indonesian police, disregarded the principles of safety and security outlined in the FIFA and PSSI Safety and Security Regulations.

## 5 Conclusion

The Kanjuruhan disaster is yet another result from the mismanagement of football matches in Indonesia. The PSSI has been at fault from the beginning for their half-hearted management and attitude towards fan safety. The mistakes started with the absence of factual verification of the Kanjuruhan stadium before the competition began. Just a few days before the match, the police requested a change in the match schedule due to security

risks, but PSSI and PT LIB rejected the request. The Arema FC vs. Persebaya match on October 1, 2022, was not considered high-risk. More fatally, PSSI did not pay attention to the mechanisms for high-risk matches.

The poor management of the match becomes even more acute because PT LIB did not provide guidelines and individual quality standards that need to be fulfilled by potential match organizers, security officers, and match implementers proposed by football clubs. Additionally, there were no security and safety officers with certifications.

The match organizing committee and the management of the Arema FC football club did not make safety and security a priority; judging from the printing of tickets exceeding the capacity of the stadium, there are no concrete steps against security and safety violations or awareness regarding the presence of tear gas which is the main cause of hundreds of fatalities, availability of vehicle facilities, and ensuring security devices (steward) meet maximum needs with high-risk status (high risk).

PT LIB as the operator as well as the person in charge of the overall operation of the competition, among others, did not take concrete steps to ensure that high-risk matches run safely and properly. The actions taken are contrary to the principles of safety and security by prioritizing sponsorship interests over security and safety carried out jointly with the broadcaster.

In the wake of the Kanjuruhan Tragedy, there has been unprecedented interest in the domestic football leagues of Indonesia from national politicians, many different sectors of society as well as national and international media. President Joko Widodo and Erick Thohir have unveiled plans to reform Indonesian football from the ground up. While these statements are well-intended, it remains to be seen how seriously they will proceed with these efforts for the demands of Indonesian football fans for greater security at games and accountability from police have been ignored for decades.

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