

## Exploring Post-Kanjuruhan Tragedy Trauma Experiences: A Description of Emotional Trauma

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### Abstract:

The emotional trauma experienced by the survivors and families of the victims of the Kanjuruhan tragedy in Malang city. The tragedy occurred during a football match between Arema and Persebaya on October 1, 2022, resulting in 135 deaths, mostly teenagers. The tragedy was caused by a riot that started after Arema lost the game, and security forces used tear gas towards the audience. The panic and stampede caused by the tear gas, coupled with closed exit doors, resulted in many fatalities. The emotional trauma experienced by the survivors and families of the victims can cause long-term psychological impacts, such as stress, sadness, depression, and anxiety, and even post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, and severe depression. The research aims to investigate the emotional trauma experienced by the survivors and families of the victims of the Kanjuruhan tragedy. The research is a qualitative study using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach. IPA is used to investigate how individuals actively interpret their experiences and give meaning to events or objects in their lives. Four participants who were victims of the Kanjuruhan tragedy and survived were involved in this study. The random sampling method was used due to the sensitivity of the research and the difficulty in identifying Kanjuruhan victims who were willing to be interviewed. The data analysis technique used was Descriptive Phenomenological Analysis (DPA).

**keyword:** Traumatic, Emotional Traumatic, PTSD, Kanjuruhan Tragedy

### Introduction:

The tragic incident that claimed a significant number of lives is considered the third-worst match in football history (Ulum, Widiyanto, & Rachmawan, 2022). The football match between Arema and Persebaya on October 1, 2022, which ended with a score of 2:3, resulted in 135 fatalities and 330 injuries. This tragedy began when supporters of Arema FC, known as Aremania, entered the field (Mardatila, 2023). The increasing number of supporters attempting to enter the pitch

led to chaos, prompting security personnel and the police to fire tear gas to push back the Aremania who had stormed the field. The decision to fire tear gas towards the stands caused many spectators to experience difficulty breathing, eye irritation, and panic attacks, which led to some falling from the stands and being trampled by others trying to escape the gas (Alwaton, 2023).

The growing number of casualties was exacerbated by locked exits, narrow spaces, and the sheer

number of spectators trying to leave, all while being affected by tear gas, which deprived them of oxygen (Mogot, Waluyo, Solihin, & Yasundari, 2022). This incident left a lasting negative impact on the mental health of the spectators who were present. Especially for the survivors and the families of the victims who lost their lives in this tragedy, the psychological toll was significant. Many survivors experienced trauma, both physical and psychological. The aftermath of such a disaster is a period when victims exhibit numerous psychosocial symptoms such as stress, sadness, depression, and anxiety (Cohen, 2002). In the long term, the psychological impact of the disaster can lead to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and severe depression (Leon, 2004).

Trauma arises or occurs within individuals who have experienced a traumatic event, causing a psychological shock that makes it difficult for them to accept the unfortunate event as part of their lives. The term "trauma" is understood not as a physical injury or wound but as a mental or psychological wound (Caruth, 2016). Trauma is a memory of a past traumatic event that forms a complex recollection, with its sudden recurrence making it hard to fully accept as part of one's life experience. Based on the explanation above, the researcher aims to explore the emotional trauma experienced by the survivors and the families of the victims following the Kanjuruhan tragedy in Malang.

### **Emotional Trauma:**

Trauma can be defined as a response to an event that disrupts a safe life, rendering it no longer perceived as a place of refuge (Wright, 2011). Accidents, rape, or natural disasters are some examples of traumatic events that can lead to trauma in individuals. Trauma is viewed as more than just a crisis condition; it is a normal reaction to an abnormal event that exceeds an individual's ability to adapt, leaving them feeling powerless (Wright, 2011).

When someone experiences a disaster, common responses may include unexpected emotional changes, shifts in thinking and behavior, heightened sensitivity to environmental changes,

difficulties in social interactions, and problems related to their physical condition. In more severe cases, some forms of psychological disorders that individuals may experience include Acute Stress Disorder (ASD), or if the trauma persists over time, they may develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

According to MSF Holland (2011), trauma is a shocking and unexpected event, an unusual situation that induces feelings of helplessness and threatens life, both physically and emotionally (MSF Holland, 2011). The word "emotion" comes from the Latin word *\*movere\**, which means "to move," and the prefix "e" is added to imply "moving away." Emotion is defined as an activity or turmoil of thoughts, feelings, and desires from any intense or overwhelming mental state (Goleman, 1990).

Goleman (1990) stated that there are hundreds of emotions, varying and mutating within each individual. The complexity of emotions experienced by individuals can be divided into core or basic emotions, such as fear, anger, sadness, and joy. Santrock (1988) expanded these basic emotions to include fear, anger, sadness, joy, hatred, and surprise. Sometimes, these core emotions may overflow and blend with others, such as fear merging with sadness or anger (Hude, 2006). Various emotions felt by individuals can trigger trauma when these emotions arise during life-threatening events. Emotional trauma is the psychological impact of a traumatic event, leaving individuals feeling powerless and emotionally vulnerable (Putra, 2022).

### **Research Method:**

This study is qualitative research using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach. IPA is designed to investigate how individuals understand their experiences, emphasizing that participants are actively engaged in interpreting events or objects in their lives (Pietkiewicz & Jonathan A., 2014). The phenomenon of interest in this research is the emotional trauma experienced by the victims of the Kanjuruhan tragedy in Malang City.

**Participants:**

Four individuals who survived the Kanjuruhan tragedy were involved as participants in this study. The limited number of participants is due to the difficulty in conducting interviews, which resulted in less-than-optimal data collection. The criteria for participants are those who directly witnessed the football match on that day, became victims of the Kanjuruhan tragedy, and survived. The purposive sampling method was used in this research due to the sensitivity of the topic and the difficulty in identifying Kanjuruhan victims willing to be interviewed. Participants were recruited through a willingness questionnaire distributed via social media.

The interview consisted of a series of general questions focused on the participants' experiences during the football match and the tragedy. In addition to basic questions (age, education, and occupation) and background questions related to the situation during the Kanjuruhan tragedy, participants were asked open-ended questions about their feelings during the event, starting with how the chaos unfolded. General questions included, "What did you feel when you were in that situation?"

Participants who agreed to participate gave their consent implicitly through conversation. The interviews were conducted directly by the researcher at a cafe. Participants were assured that all responses would remain confidential. The participants' real names were not included in this

study; instead, only their initials were used. Each interview lasted around 45-60 minutes. The researcher took detailed notes to ensure credibility and minimize bias. Participants were allowed to review the interview findings to ensure no information was missed and to clarify any points at the end of the interview.

The data collection method used was interviews, specifically semi-structured interviews. This type of interview follows a guide or framework but allows for flexible questioning that can be adapted to the situation. The purpose of using semi-structured interviews was to obtain detailed and in-depth information about the participants' perspectives, allowing them the freedom to express their thoughts, views, and feelings without being strictly controlled by the researcher, yet still within the framework of the research questions.

**Data Analysis Procedure:**

The data analysis technique used in this study follows the Descriptive Phenomenological Analysis (DPA) method: (1) Repeatedly reading the transcript; (2) Creating meaning units; (3) Transforming/describing meaning units; (4) Transforming/describing psychological aspects; (5) Identifying major themes or constituents (Kahija, 2017).

**Research Results;**

The overall summary of the research data was analyzed using the Descriptive Phenomenological Analysis (DPA) approach.

| Theme                    |                          |                          |                          | Theme Synthesis    |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Participant 1            | Participant 2            | Participant 3            | Participant 4            |                    |
| The Causes of a Tragedy. | The Causes of a Tragedy. | The Causes of a Tragedy. | The Causes of a Tragedy. | Event Summary      |
| Personal Opinion.        | Personal Opinion.        | Personal Opinion.        | Personal Opinion.        |                    |
| Physical Impact.         | Physical Impact.         | Physical Impact.         | Physical Impact.         | Traumatic Symptoms |
| Psychological Impact.    | Psychological Impact.    | .                        | Psychological Impact.    |                    |

|                             |                                |                             |                             |                    |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Empathy Towards the Victim. | Empathy Towards the Victim.    | Empathy Towards the Victim. | Empathy Towards the Victim. | Emotional Feelings |
| -                           | Empathy Towards Arema Players. | -                           | -                           |                    |
| -                           | -                              | -                           | Sincerity.                  |                    |
| Shock                       | Shock                          | Shock                       | Shock                       |                    |
| -                           | Gratitude.                     | -                           | -                           |                    |
| -                           | The feeling of Sadness.        | -                           | The feeling of Sadness.     |                    |
| -                           | Guilt                          | -                           | Guilt                       |                    |
| Denial.                     | Denial.                        | Denial.                     | Denial.                     |                    |
| Hope                        | Hope                           | Hope                        | Hope                        | Hope               |

**Discussion:**

The following is a discussion of the research data analyzed using the Descriptive Phenomenological Analysis (DPA) approach:

**1. Recap of Events:**

The Kanjuruhan tragedy began with the defeat of the Arema team against Persebaya, with a score of 2-3. Some supporters entered the field to encourage the Arema players, while others protested the team's loss, which eventually led to a clash between the police and supporters. The police attempted to disperse the supporters who entered the field by using tear gas and police dogs, but these actions did not reduce the number of supporters on the field. Soon after, police fired tear gas into the stands, causing the situation to become even more uncontrollable. There were five to six shots of tear gas directed at stands 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, followed by nearly a dozen shots aimed at the southern stands: 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14. Many minors and women

were present in these stands, which caused panic and worsened the situation. The supporters affected by the tear gas rushed out of the stadium, creating a stampede. The limited access to exits, which were only partially open, led to many fatalities due to lack of oxygen and from supporters falling from the stands as a result of the tear gas. The chaos also extended outside the stadium. Tear gas was not only fired inside the stadium but also outside, causing further disorder. Explosions were heard outside the stadium, reportedly from police cars being set on fire by supporters, which exacerbated the situation and made it even more uncontrollable.

**2. Traumatic Symptoms:**

The tragedy had significant physical effects on the victims, which varied depending on their physical resilience. Individuals with weaker physical conditions were more vulnerable to severe physical trauma. Many victims experienced difficulty breathing, vision problems, and a burning sensation in the nose, eyes, and throat. Additionally, distress

was observed, leading to loss of appetite and disrupted sleep patterns. According to Luthans (2011), under stress, individuals tend to eat less, overeat, have trouble sleeping, increase their consumption of cigarettes and alcohol, or abuse drugs. Some participants in this study exhibited a lack of appetite, difficulty sleeping, changes in daily activities, and becoming more withdrawn than usual. However, overeating, increased smoking or alcohol consumption, and drug abuse did not occur in this study. Serene Jones (2009) stated that "Trauma means a wound or injury inflicted upon the body by an act of violence. To be traumatized is to be slashed or struck down by a hostile external force that threatens to destroy you." Similarly, Sutiyono (2010) also noted that trauma is an abnormal mental or behavioral state caused by psychological pressure or physical injury from an event that leaves a deep impression and cannot be overcome. Trauma can occur in individuals who witness, experience, or feel directly affected by horrific or life-threatening events. This aligns with the experiences of the Kanjuruhan tragedy victims, who suffered both physical injuries and psychological impacts, manifesting in symptoms of psychological trauma.

### **3. Emotional Feelings:**

The Kanjuruhan tragedy had specific psychological effects on the victims. These psychological impacts depended on the victims' emotional state. When someone experiences an unexpected event or tragedy, it can affect their mood, resulting in emotional responses. Some of the emotional responses expressed by participants included feelings of sadness, confusion, anger, anxiety, and

guilt. Victims felt sad seeing the chaos and never imagined it would be as severe as it was. One participant mentioned shedding tears while waiting for friends in the parking area and seeing many dead bodies lying around the stadium. A participant who worked in the media also expressed sadness after discovering that a victim they tried to save had passed away, and they felt even more sorrow witnessing a mother unable to accept the death of her beloved child. In addition to physiological disturbances, mental and emotional aspects were also affected, such as negative attitudes, worry, sadness, confusion, anger, and more (Kaswan, 2017). Several participants in this study displayed feelings of sadness and guilt. Although participants were also shocked by the sudden and uncontrollable events, they felt grateful for their survival. They remained empathetic toward other victims who suffered more severe consequences, even though they were victims themselves in the tragedy.

### **4. Disappointment:**

The Kanjuruhan tragedy also caused disappointment for participants. They believed that tear gas, which is explicitly banned by FIFA regulations, should not have been used. Participants were not only disappointed with the authorities but also with the supporters who could not control their behavior, which contributed to the chaos. They felt there were many irregularities. Although participants felt sad and disappointed by the tragedy, they realized that dwelling on these negative emotions would only deepen their despair, so they tried to manage their emotions well. They aimed to be sincere and grateful for their survival.

## 5. Hopes:

Participants expressed several hopes for the future. They hoped that Indonesian football supporters, in particular, would be more organized. They also hoped that event organizers would ensure ticket sales aligned with stadium capacity. Participants desired safer and more comfortable stadium facilities for all ages and groups. The main hope shared by all participants was for justice for the victims. They wanted the Kanjuruhan tragedy to be thoroughly investigated to prevent similar events from happening again.

## Conclusion:

Based on the results of data analysis and literature review, it can be concluded that the emotional feelings experienced by the victims of the Kanjuruhan tragedy—such as guilt, sadness, confusion, and disappointment—had an impact on their psychological condition. Physical injuries, such as eye irritation, burning sensations in the nose, and a sore throat, were reported. The psychological effects observed in the victims included changes in eating habits and disrupted sleep patterns, lasting an average of three to seven days. Emotional changes, such as deep sadness and melancholy, were also triggered when recalling the tragedy. The physical and psychological symptoms experienced by the victims of the Kanjuruhan tragedy have the potential to lead to emotional trauma. Despite the various negative impacts suffered by the victims, there are hopes expressed by them, including the desire for the case to be thoroughly and fairly resolved for the victims, as well as improvements in the regulations governing football matches in Indonesia.

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