

Building Unity: Roblox Community's Twitter Response to Affan Kurniawan Tragedy

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v10i6.1585>

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how members of the Indonesian Roblox community used language on Twitter to express solidarity and organize fundraising efforts following the tragic death of Affan Kurniawan during a demonstration, aiming to analyze the linguistic strategies this gaming community employed to build a collective identity and coordinate charitable actions across digital platforms. The study examined 23 Twitter comments from Indonesian Roblox community members, selected through purposive sampling based on their participation in fundraising discussions and memorial activities related to the Affan Kurniawan case. Using Critical Discourse Analysis with Van Dijk's three-dimensional framework, the research analyzed macrostructure (thematic organization), superstructure (discourse schemas), and microstructure (semantic, syntactic, lexical, and stylistic elements) through a qualitative examination of linguistic patterns and discourse strategies. The analysis revealed five primary thematic domains: Memorial and Commemoration, Donation and Financial Support, Gaming Platform Integration, Social Justice and Political Critique, and Community Solidarity and Collective Identity, with Gaming Platform Integration emerging as a novel form of digital activism. The findings showed that community members strategically used code-switching between Indonesian and English, Islamic terminology, gaming-specific vocabulary, and varied syntactic structures to maintain cultural authenticity while facilitating cross-platform activism. The study concludes that gaming communities possess unique linguistic capabilities for social organizing that extend beyond traditional social media activism, contributing new insights to digital discourse analysis and revealing how marginalized communities can leverage unconventional digital resources to create effective solidarity networks and organize meaningful collective action in response to social injustices.

Keywords: *Community Solidarity, Critical Discourse Analysis, Digital Activism, Gaming Communities, Social Media*

Article History:

Received 13th October 2025

Accepted 19th November 2025

Published 20th November 2025



INTRODUCTION

The tragic death of Affan Kurniawan, a young Indonesian Roblox player who lost his life during a public demonstration, sparked a wave of collective mourning and solidarity across digital platforms. What began as expressions of grief among fellow gamers soon transformed into a coordinated fundraising movement led by members of the Indonesian Roblox community on Twitter. This spontaneous online mobilization reflected not only the emotional bonds formed within gaming spaces but also how digital communities can extend their sense of solidarity beyond gameplay to address real-world social issues.

In recent years, Roblox has emerged as a significant platform for research examining digital communities, social interactions, and learning environments. Aliyyah et al. (2024) conducted a comprehensive study that explored the relationships between platform understanding, collaborative learning, and community participation within the Indonesian Roblox community. Their quantitative research, involving 240 university students aged 18–25 from Banten Province, demonstrated that understanding Roblox's integrated business model and engaging in collaborative learning significantly influence participation in decision-making processes and contribute to cooperative literacy development. The study's findings highlight the platform's role as more than just a gaming environment, positioning it as a space

where users develop important collaborative skills through their engagement with the platform's economy and community structures.

Complementing this business-focused perspective, Azzahra et al. (2025) examined the social dimensions of the platform in their study "Virtual Socialization Through Online Game: Social Interaction in Roblox," which investigated how Roblox facilitates virtual socialization and community building. Their qualitative research identified distinct interaction patterns within the platform, including two-way private communications and multi-directional group interactions, revealing that 72% of players experienced improved social skills and 70% developed meaningful friendships through their participation.

Similarly, Morreale & Rosa (2024) contributed to understanding Roblox's educational potential in "Roblox and the Pervasiveness of Play: What Game-Making Communities Can Teach Us About Participatory Practices in Affinity Spaces," where they analyzed the platform's learning environment through a pedagogical lens. Their interdisciplinary case study demonstrated how Roblox functions as an educational affinity space that combines play and learning, incorporating developmental elements aligned with Piaget's stages of childhood development and facilitating informal knowledge sharing through legitimate peripheral participation. These studies collectively establish Roblox as a multifaceted platform that serves not only as entertainment but as a space for community building, skill development, and collaborative learning.

The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has become an important tool for understanding how language works in society, especially when looking at power relationships and social issues. Van Dijk's approach to CDA looks at three main levels: the text structure (what is actually written), social thinking (how people understand things), and social context (the bigger picture of what's happening in society) (Van Dijk, 1997). This method has been used successfully in many studies about social media and online movements.

The application of CDA to social media activism has revealed consistent patterns across different cultural contexts. Haliza and Triyono (2022) used Van Dijk's CDA model to study the #stopasianhate movement on Twitter, showing how people used language to fight against racism toward Asian Americans. Their study of over 5.5 million tweets found that people used specific word choices, sentence structures, and emotional expressions to create a strong anti-racism message. The research identified three key levels of analysis: macrostructure revealed racism as the core theme, superstructure showed spontaneous discussion patterns without fixed message sequences, and microstructure highlighted calls to action through semantic details and rhetorical expressions of anger and empathy.

Similarly, Alugbin & Iyoha (2024) applied CDA to analyze Nigeria's #EndSARS protests, discovering how protesters used language strategies like blame attribution and victim positioning to build resistance against police brutality. Their analysis of 1,000 tweets revealed that discursive strategies such as recontextualization of events, categorization, and cross-border appeal were instrumental in sustaining solidarity and creating bonds among marginalized groups. The study demonstrated how online discourse facilitated "positive self-presentation" of protesters while creating "negative other-presentation" of government agencies, effectively communicating resistance and triggering both psychological and physical action.

The effectiveness of CDA in revealing power dynamics extends beyond protest movements to include analysis of political communication and meme culture. Wahyuni (2025) employed Van Dijk's CDA model to examine political memes about tax increases in Indonesia, finding that memes served as effective vehicles for social criticism through visual and textual elements. Their analysis revealed how citizens used satire, hyperbole, and irony to express dissatisfaction with government fiscal policies, demonstrating that CDA can decode complex multimodal messages that combine text and images.

Political discourse analysis has also shown how different actors use language strategically on social media platforms. Abdulmajeed & El-Ibiary (2020) analyzed Egyptian political influencers' Twitter strategies, revealing distinct communicative approaches between different types of political figures. Their mixed-methods approach combining content analysis

with CDA showed how some influencers used evidence-based communication to defend human rights, while others employed less clear strategies, highlighting the importance of analyzing both content and context in political communication.

However, CDA faces new challenges in the digital age. Bouvier & Machin (2018) point out that social media has made it harder to trace how powerful groups influence public opinion because there are so many different voices and types of content online. They argue that CDA needs to adapt to study not just written text, but also images, videos, and other multimedia content that people share on social media. The traditional focus on elite texts like news articles is no longer sufficient when ordinary users can create viral content that influences public opinion.

The evolution of CDA methodology has also been influenced by the need to analyze different types of digital content. Prayitno et al. (2021) demonstrated how CDA can be applied to analyze directive speech acts in social media discourse, specifically examining politeness strategies in government policy discussions. Their research showed that CDA can reveal how citizens use various speech acts like suggesting, criticizing, and appealing to oversee government policies, contributing to our understanding of digital civic engagement.

Online communication has created new ways for people to express themselves and connect with others. Research shows that digital platforms have their own special language features that are different from traditional face-to-face conversation. People online use things like shortened words, emojis, hashtags, and code-switching (mixing different languages) to communicate effectively within the limits of digital platforms.

Studies from different countries show similar patterns in how people communicate online. Ndukwani & Ramhurry (2023) found that South African university students used lots of emojis, informal language, and modern abbreviations across Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter. Similarly, Gervasio & Karuri (2019) discovered that Kenyan students mixed English, Kiswahili, and local languages in their WhatsApp groups to show their group identity. These patterns suggest that online communication creates new forms of community belonging that cross traditional boundaries.

The language people use online also reflects cultural values and social relationships. Abdullazoda (2025) studied politeness in Uzbek social media and found that people maintain traditional respectful address forms while also using new digital features like emojis to show friendliness. This shows how online discourse both preserves and changes cultural practices. Additionally, research on political communication shows that different types of organizations (government, political parties, civil groups) develop their own unique online language styles to connect with their audiences (Orosa & López, 2019).

Social media platforms have become powerful tools for building community support and organizing social movements. Research shows that hashtags, in particular, help create shared identities and mobilize people around common causes. The ability to quickly spread information and connect with like-minded individuals has transformed how activism works in the modern world.

Several studies demonstrate how online communities use digital platforms to challenge injustice and support marginalized groups. Bhatia (2022) analyzed how Twitter's technocultural features like brevity and repeatability were used to foster discriminatory Hindu nationalism in India, showing how platform affordances can be co-opted for both positive and negative movements. The research revealed that users employed discursive strategies to construct tolerant self-images while manufacturing panic about Muslims, demonstrating how virtual enactments of discriminatory ideology can translate into material violence. This highlights the double-edged nature of digital platforms in social movements.

On the constructive side, Latief & Bahar (2022) studied the #PercumaLaporPolisi hashtag in Indonesia, which was used to criticize police inaction and demand better law enforcement. Their analysis revealed that the hashtag became a trending topic following public outrage over police handling of sexual assault cases, with netizens using sarcasm and satire to convey negative images of police performance. The study showed how hashtag

campaigns can make cases viral as warnings to authorities, with increased public response leading to greater popularity and encouraging authorities to take action.

International solidarity movements have also benefited from digital platforms' ability to cross national boundaries. The research on #stopasianhate (Haliza & Triyono, 2022) demonstrated how anti-racism activism spread globally through Twitter, with users from different countries joining to condemn violence against Asian communities. Similarly, the #EndSARS movement in Nigeria (Alugbin & Iyoha, 2024) showed how local police brutality concerns expanded to address broader issues like corruption and bad governance, indicating that digital activism often serves as a catalyst for wider social and political discussions.

The research also reveals how online advocacy can lead to real-world change through institutional pressure and public awareness. Zikrulloh (2024) studied Project Multatuli's journalism work supporting online transportation drivers in Indonesia, showing how digital media can give voice to marginalized workers and expose unfair business practices. The advocacy journalism consistently emphasized inequality experienced by drivers, highlighted gender discrimination, and critically examined the detrimental impact of ranking systems driven by capitalist power. This demonstrates how sustained digital advocacy can expose structural injustices and create pressure for policy changes.

Gender-based digital activism has proven particularly effective in challenging traditional power structures. Altoaimy (2018) found that Saudi women used Twitter to challenge driving bans through four main strategies: questioning religious authority through intertextual references, victimizing women to highlight harassment and economic burdens, promoting women's independence by emphasizing their economic contributions, and appealing directly to state authority to bypass religious establishment input. The study concluded that while Twitter may not be revolutionary, it enables ongoing negotiation of women's issues and creates unique pressure on established authorities.

Digital activism also involves creating new forms of religious and cultural identity that challenge traditional authority structures. Kurniawan & Alhaq (2019) examined how Indonesian Muslims use social media to spread Islamic messages and build new forms of religious community. Their research revealed that cyber-media activism, particularly through the "hijrah" movement, transforms identities and empowers young people as both consumers and "agents of goodness" in spreading Islamic messages. The study found that social media facilitated a significant shift in religious authority, challenging traditional Islamic organizations and empowering new forms of religious leadership.

Community-driven advocacy has also emerged as a significant force in addressing social issues through digital platforms. The analysis of advocacy journalism shows how digital media can consistently expose systemic problems and create sustained pressure for change. Project Multatuli's work demonstrated how online media can highlight issues like gamification in the gig economy, showing how it compels drivers to work longer hours while reducing income and undermining solidarity among workers.

Professional and identity-based communities have also used digital platforms to create support networks and advocacy systems. The AcademicTwitter community (Gomez-Vasquez et al., 2024) revealed how scholars use social media for professional visibility and networking, though the research found fragmented communication patterns that may limit collective action potential. This suggests that while digital platforms enable community formation, the effectiveness of solidarity depends on how well communities can overcome structural fragmentation and algorithmic limitations.

While existing research has extensively explored digital activism, social media solidarity movements, and online community responses to various social issues, there remains a significant gap in understanding how gaming communities specifically mobilize linguistic resources for social causes beyond their platform boundaries. Previous studies have predominantly focused on general social media activism or examined gaming communities within their native platforms, but limited attention has been given to how gaming communities extend their solidarity practices to other social media platforms during crisis situations. This research aims to address this gap by examining how the Indonesian Roblox

community used Twitter as a space for linguistic solidarity and fundraising organization following the Affan Kurniawan tragedy. By applying Critical Discourse Analysis to analyze the community's language choices, discourse strategies, and solidarity expressions on Twitter, this study seeks to contribute novel insights into cross-platform community mobilization and the role of gaming communities in broader social advocacy efforts.

METHOD

This research used a qualitative approach to study how people communicate online during times of crisis. The study focused on the Indonesian Roblox community's response to the death of Affan Kurniawan. A total of 22 tweets were selected from community members who joined the fundraising campaign and expressed solidarity through Twitter posts.

All tweets were collected from August 29 to August 31, 2025, which was the period when most of the fundraising and memorial activities took place. This timeframe was chosen because it represented the peak of the community's online engagement and emotional response.

The data were selected through purposive sampling, focusing only on tweets that clearly showed support, donation participation, or community reaction to the tragedy. To understand the language patterns completely, this research applied Van Dijk's (1997) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework together with Krippendorff's (2018) Content Analysis. This combination helped the researchers analyze both the meaning of the messages and the way language was used to express solidarity, grief, and collective identity within the community's online communication.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis identified five major thematic domains that structured the Indonesian Roblox community's Twitter response to the Affan Kurniawan tragedy. These domains represent the community's collective linguistic strategies in expressing grief, solidarity, and activism. The frequency of each theme is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The Macrostructure (Theme)

The Macrostructure (Theme)		
No.	Theme	Frequencies
1.	Donation and Financial Support	14
2.	Community Solidarity and Collective Identity	12
3.	Memorial and Commemoration	11
4.	Gaming Platform Integration	7
5.	Social Justice and Political Critique	4

As shown in Table 1, the most dominant theme is Donation and Financial Support, followed by Community Solidarity and Collective Identity, Memorial and Commemoration, Gaming Platform Integration, and Social Justice and Political Critique. Each theme is discussed in detail under the following subheadings.

Donation and Financial Support

This domain appeared in 14 comments and reflects the most prominent collective behavior within the dataset. Community members transformed empathy into coordinated action by initiating and participating in donation drives. Tweets such as *"I would like to open a donation drive for the family of the late Affan"* and *"join guys, just 7 Robux"* show how emotional responses were operationalized into pragmatic support.

The discourse follows a recognizable **Problem Identification** → **Solution Proposal** → **Community Mobilization** → **Participation Confirmation** → **Gratitude** pattern. The initiator introduces the tragic event, proposes a donation plan, encourages participation, and concludes with thanks or blessings. This reflects traditional charitable discourse structures adapted to social media.

Table 2. Superstructure (Schema)

No.	Schema	The Superstructure (Schema)	Sequence
1.	Donation Appeal and Fundraising Campaign	Problem Identification	Solution Proposal → Community Mobilization → Participation Confirmation → Blessing/Gratitude
2.	Memorial and Condolence	Death Acknowledgment	Tribute Expression → Religious Intercession → Personal Reflection
3.	Community Mobilization and Collective Action	Issue Identification	Call for Unity → Action Specification → Voice Amplification
4.	Gaming Community Integration	Platform Identification	Resource Conversion → In-Game Integration → Community Expansion
5.	Testimonial and Personal Witness	Personal Positioning	Emotional Response → Value Assessment → Implicit Critique

As summarized in Table 2, the *Donation Appeal and Fundraising Campaign* schema exemplifies this thematic domain, blending social concern with digital resource mobilization. At the microstructure level, the language demonstrates several key features:

Semantic: Causal logic connects tragedy to moral duty ("to ease the burden of the family").

Syntactic: Declarative and imperative sentences dominate ("Let's donate," "I've already donated").

Lexical: Terms such as donation, QRIS, Robux, and purchase highlight both digital and real financial participation.

Stylistic: Politeness markers like kak and emoticons maintain cultural warmth while promoting inclusivity.

Community Solidarity and Collective Identity

This theme, appearing in 12 comments, constructs the social foundation that sustains collective action. Inclusive language—"guys," "friends," "let's support"—creates emotional togetherness. Participants use shared address forms and mutual encouragement, emphasizing that helping Affan's family is a shared responsibility.

The superstructure here follows an **Issue Identification** → **Call for Unity** → **Action Specification** → **Emotional Reinforcement** sequence. Each tweet strengthens interpersonal ties and reinforces the sense of belonging that enables collective mobilization.

At the microstructural level:

Semantic: Positive relational markers emphasize belonging and empathy.

Syntactic: Inclusive imperatives (e.g., "Let's support") transform personal emotion into communal motivation.

Lexical: Informal English, Indonesian address forms, and slang (e.g., guys, kak) foster approachability.

Stylistic: Code-switching reinforces warmth and authenticity within online solidarity discourse.

Memorial and Commemoration

This domain (11 comments) expresses collective mourning and respect. Users employ expressions like "rest in peace," "fly high," and "May the late one be accepted by His side." These phrases combine global digital condolence language with local Islamic traditions, turning individual grief into shared remembrance.

The discourse follows a **Death Acknowledgment** → **Tribute Expression** → **Religious Intercession** → **Personal Reflection** schema, demonstrating how online communities adapt traditional mourning practices to social media.

At the microstructure level:

Semantic: Oppositions of life/death and loss/hope create emotional depth.

Syntactic: Simple declaratives ("Rest in peace, Affan") act as digital epitaphs.

Lexical: Words like rest in power, accepted by His side, and fly high combine sacred and colloquial registers.

Stylistic: Emojis (❤️🙏) and repetition of condolence formulas amplify sincerity and emotional resonance.

Gaming Platform Integration

This theme (7 comments) introduces a novel discourse where gaming culture merges with social activism. Users transform Roblox features into tools for fundraising and memorialization. Tweets mention converting “Robux” into donations, creating memorial avatars, and forming “ojol jacket” groups in-game.

This theme follows a **Platform Identification** → **Resource Conversion** → **In-Game Memorialization** → **Community Expansion** schema, where gaming spaces become activism platforms.

At the microstructure level:

Semantic: Cause-effect relationships link gameplay visibility with fundraising (“It’ll get noticed by other players, so it attracts more people to buy too”).

Syntactic: Imperatives such as “help donate by buy the shirt here” reflect multilingual hybridization but retain clarity.

Lexical: Platform-specific terms – Roblox, Robux, avatar, character – anchor the movement within gamer identity.

Stylistic: Playful tone, English-Indonesian mixing, and enthusiasm maintain authenticity while supporting activism.

Social Justice and Political Critique

Although represented by only four comments, this theme introduces critical reflection on structural injustice. Tweets such as “the killer who works and whose salary is paid from the state budget” and “let’s make our voices heard!” connect Affan’s death to broader systemic problems. This domain follows a **Problem Exposure** → **Moral Evaluation** → **Call for Awareness** → **Collective Resistance** schema. The participants expand the conversation from grief to protest, positioning themselves as socially aware citizens.

At the microstructure level:

Semantic: Oppositions like victim/perpetrator and citizen/state structure moral evaluation.

Syntactic: Declaratives and exclamations (“Let’s make our voices heard!”) express both outrage and hope.

Lexical: Political terms (killer, state budget, protest) add civic gravitas.

Stylistic: A serious, assertive tone replaces casual gamer language, marking a shift toward activism.

Microstructure Data Reference

To support the microstructural analysis, Table 3 presents the dataset of representative tweets analyzed in this study.

Table 3. Data for Microstructure Analysis

Data	Caption
1	@cucur_antract Hello, my name is Ands/Krito. I would like to take this opportunity to open a donation drive for the family of the late Affan, an online motorcycle taxi driver who died tragically in yesterday's demonstration.
2	@kuromibasudara purchased, I've already donated through QRIS too earlier kak. Thank you so much for opening this donation, hopefully it can ease a little bit the burden of the family left behind and become abundant blessings for kakak too (heart) rest in power kak affan (emoticons)
3	@0509zl Friends who want to join me and help donate to the victims' families can check out the thread below, yep (emoticons)
4	@9uixotice Those who like to play Roblox, you can help out, right, guys?
5	@dionyjoonz guys, for my friends who are currently into playing Roblox, the Robux can be set aside a little for donations to the late Affan through here (heart)
6	@lloPPIBEAR For those who want to donate to the family of the late Affan, you can join through this kakak yaaa (emoticon)
7	@wishbonewaves help donate by buy the shirt here (heart)
8	@dontbe5ad Rest in peace, Affan. Knowing that Affan was the same age as me, just one month apart, makes it even more heartbreaking. I mean, he was still young, especially since he was the breadwinner of his family :(And the person who killed him worked and was paid from the state budget.
9	@Umemiya_Pranowo Done min Rest in peace, Affan (emoticon)
10	@astrologych Let's support (heart)
11	@lovingcannnhurt they took his life, but not his light (emoticon)
12	@hyeuji purchased. thank you for your immense kindness

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13	@ourleyis knowing affan is one year older than me and he's so hardworking in earning a living whereas I'm here still playing roblox all the time :(rest in peace, affannnn (emoticons)
14	@nadgin Thank you so much for opening the donation, I've already participated even though it's not much. Hopefully it's beneficial and you're trustworthy!
15	@jeevierhugword May the late one be accepted by His side, thank you for opening donations for the family of the late one.
16	@jakeunana May it be trustworthy and blessed for the grieving family
17	@onaamii join guys just 7 robux, which is donated to Affan's family, the jacket that's this one yeah, don't buy random ojol jackets
18	@xcxhxixi People are already kind, and the way they open donations is super cool. Using a Roblox avatar like this can be used in the game (it'll definitely get noticed by other players, so it attracts more people to buy too).
19	@portgazdiesu for Affan Kurniawan. Out of respect and humanity, as my protest, I changed my Roblox character into an ojol uniform. Rest in power, Affan. You all, can you can do the same, if you want.
20	@windyisherenow Is there anyone who's serious about creating a channel for the ojol jacket group? Might as well do an online tahlilan for Affan too.
21	@rockjtar tribute to affan kurniawan
22	@ourleyis I did!! Fly high, affan (emoticons)
23	@FlnklZ Follow :D, let's make our voices heard!

The examples in Table 3 demonstrate how linguistic choices—from syntax and word choice to emoticon use—reflect the community's negotiation of emotion, identity, and activism.

CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that the Indonesian Roblox community successfully used language as a tool for social mobilization, turning digital interaction into real collective action after the Affan Kurniawan tragedy. By combining gaming culture with creative linguistic expression, community members built solidarity, organized donations, and expressed shared grief in meaningful ways. The findings reveal that linguistic strategies such as code-switching, religious expressions, and gaming-related vocabulary were not only forms of communication but also acted as mobilizing forces. These strategies guided participants from emotional response to organized support, showing how language can shape unity and inspire coordinated action within digital communities. Theoretically, this research highlights the connection between linguistic strategy and social mobilization, offering new insight into how online groups especially gaming communities can use language to strengthen solidarity and promote social causes. It shows that in digital spaces, language functions both as a means of expression and as a catalyst for real-world activism, bridging emotional connection with collective movement.

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