

Animal names as insults: A look through the lens of Bosnian Džemal Špago, Džemal Bijedic University of Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina

This study explores the abusive use of animal names in reference to people in Bosnian, their level of offensiveness and negative meanings associated with them, as well as potential gender-related differences in regard to these issues. The analysis is based on the results of two online surveys conducted among two groups of Bosnian university students (142 and 61, respectively). Although a total of 39 animal names have been used in reference to male and female targets, most of the respondents (over 70%) used only three for each gender, when asked to think of the most despised male and female person, and to use an animal name in reference to each of them. The results indicate that the most frequently used female-directed animal names are more associated with bad character and less with a lack of manners than those which are male-directed. The results also show different levels of offensiveness of different animal names, which is particularly evident in the case of female-directed ones. Certain statistically significant gender-related differences in the use and perception of animal names as insults have also been noted.

Keywords: *animal names, insults, Bosnian, gender differences*

1 Introduction

The use of insulting language can be associated with different intentions of the addressor (to offend, praise or bond with the target)¹ (Mateo & Yus 2013), but the primary one is to release negative emotions towards the target by humiliating or offending it (Janicki 2015; Gabriel 1998). The interpretation of insults is always context-dependent, as the same content can be insulting to some people and not insulting to others (Jucker 2000), can be interpreted as insulting or non-insulting depending on paralinguistic or prosodic features (Mateo & Yus 2013), or have different levels of offensiveness. While cultural differences often play a role in the use and interpretation of insulting language, there is a shared set of “fixed lexical fields” around which insults are organized in various cultural backgrounds, one of them being the metaphorical use of animal names in reference to people (Mateo & Yus 2013: 89; Allan & Burridge 2006).

Although comparing people to animals can have positive or negative (or even neutral) connotations (Dominguez & Zawislawska 2006; Schmauks 2014), and thereby can be used both for praising or insulting the target, studies show that the use of animal names in reference to people is more commonly associated with the latter function (Halupka-Rešetar & Radić 2003; Rodriguez 2009). In this usage, presumed negative qualities of animals are attributed to the targets of insults (Jay 2000), with different animals being associated with different negative traits in humans (Allan & Burridge 2006). The rationale behind the abusive use of animal names in reference to people is in the fact that, by evoking animal qualities in the target, the insulter presents the insultee as someone who is less than human,² i.e., through the lens of

¹ Jucker (2000: 375) uses the terms ritual vs personal insults to differentiate between those that are used playfully, and those that are aimed at hurting the target.

² The Great Chain of Being hierarchy places humans above animals, therefore putting the two at the same level generally evokes negative connotations.

dehumanization (Schmauks 2014; Haslam et al. 2011). Therefore, even if an animal is liked by people (for instance, a dog), comparing people to it often produces insulting effects (Haslam et al. 2011).

There are significant cultural differences in the use and perception of some animal names in reference to humans, which is mainly due to cultural stereotypes associated with different animals in different cultural settings (Rodriguez 2009; Jay 2000). Therefore, it is possible that the same animal can evoke positive connotations in one language, and negative ones in another (for instance, *ox* in German and Ukrainian, as noted by Schmauks 2014), have different negative connotations in different languages (e.g. *camel* in Portuguese, French, German and Italian, as noted by Dominguez & Zawislawska 2006), or even, depending on the context, have either positive or negative implications within the same language (e.g. *beast* in Polish, Dominguez & Zawislawska 2006). Gender differences in the use of animal names as insults are also notable, as some can be used in reference to both genders, and others solely apply to men or women. On a similar note, the same (negative) qualities of men and women are often evoked by names of different animals (Halupka-Rešetar & Radić 2003). These gender-related differences, as well as cultural differences, in the use of animal-based insults can vary in different languages, which leaves room for further research, especially when it comes to less influential languages, such as Bosnian.

The goals of this paper are the following: i) to explore what animal names are most commonly used as insults in reference to male and female speakers of Bosnian, ii) to investigate negative meanings the participants associate with those animal names, and how they perceive their offensiveness, and iii) to find out what gender-related differences, if any, can be noted in regard to the above-mentioned issues.

2 Background

2.1 Animal metaphors

When animal names are used in relation to people, this is based on the metaphorical transfer of animal properties onto humans. Animal metaphors represent a particularly common and important type of metaphors³, as they often help us describe or grasp different aspects of human behavior (Kövecses 2002), mostly those that carry negative connotations (Talebinejad & Dastjerdi 2005). Animal metaphors are widespread and common (Kövecses 2002) in different (cultural) backgrounds, since the domain of animals serves as “an extremely productive source domain“ (Kövecses 2002: 17) for the metaphorical transfer. While they can be used in a number of ways (for instance, Dominguez & Zawislawska (2006) group animal metaphors into the categories of *neutral*, *ameliorative*, *pejorative*, *obscene*, and *polysemous*), their derogatory use seems to be prevalent to the point that comparing people to animals represents a distinct category of insults (Allan & Burridge 2006). Since cultural differences play a significant role in the use and understanding of animal metaphors, which is mainly due to different attitudes held by members of different cultural groups towards specific animals (Deignan 2003), animal

³ According to the cognitive theory of metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Lakoff & Turner 1989), humans think and act based on the conceptual system whose essential components are metaphors. Thus, metaphors help us conceptualize, experience and understand one thing or entity by means of another, through the process of mapping one conceptual domain to another.

metaphors can serve as “important insights into the prevailing cultural model” in a given society (Silaški 2014).

In her ethnobiological classification of animal properties which appear to be of significance when relating animals to humans, Wierzbicka (1985; 1996) groups them into five categories (or thematic parts): *habitat*, *size*, *appearance*, *behavior*, and *relation to people*. Martsa (1999) slightly modifies this taxonomy by putting *size* into the thematic part of *appearance*, whereas Halupka & Prčić (1998) (as cited in Halupka-Rešetar & Radić 2003) classify such properties into the categories of *appearance*, *eating habits*, *intelligence* and *character*.

2.2 Previous studies on the use of animal names in reference to humans

A number of studies explored the (insulting) use of animal names (or animal-based insults) in different languages.

Based on a survey conducted among 94 university students, Halupka-Rešetar & Radić (2003) explored the use of animal names in reference to people in Serbian, both as terms of abuse and endearment, and found that the former use is more common, as well as that more animal names are utilized when it comes to the insulting usage. Furthermore, while examples of all four types of metaphorical transfer of animal qualities onto humans (*appearance*, *eating habits*, *intelligence*, *character*) have been recorded for the abusive usage, cases of the positive usage have been found only in the category of *appearance*. In regard to gender differences, the results indicate that the same negative qualities in men and women are most often associated with different animals.⁴

Talebinejad & Dastjerdi (2005) explored differences between animal metaphors in Persian and English – 20 native speakers of Persian and English were given 44 randomly chosen animal names, and asked to provide as many metaphors involving those names as they can, as well as to interpret their meanings. The results show that notable differences between animal metaphors in English and Persian do exist, which they mostly attribute to different cultural interpretations utilized by the speakers of these two languages.

In their study of derogatory uses of animal names in Polish and Spanish corpora, Dominguez & Zawislawska (2006) found that names of wild animals are more common in this usage than those of domestic ones, as well as that animal names which can be used as insults in reference to both genders are much more common in Spanish. Additionally, the results of their study show that the offensive use of animal names in reference to humans is, in both languages, mostly used to emphasize sloppiness or ugliness of the target, unacceptable sexual behavior, or some negative personality traits (stupidity, meanness and cunningness). The Spanish language, which seems to be more prone to such use of animal names than Polish, also contains plenty of examples of the offensive use of animal names linked with human jobs and ill-being (especially with being drunk).⁵

Rodriguez (2009) explored the use of animal-based expressions used in reference to women in English and Spanish, and concluded that most of them relate to pets, farmyard, or wild animals. The names of pet animals (in reference to women) are mostly used in the abusive

⁴ For instance, a stupid man is called *magarac* ‘donkey’, *som* ‘catfish’ or *vo* ‘ox’, and a woman with the same negative quality is called *čurka* ‘turkey’, *kokoška* ‘hen’, *koza* ‘she-goat’, etc. A rare exception is the use of the words *konj* ‘horse’ and *kobila* ‘mare’ for stupid men and women, respectively.

⁵ For instance, the animal names *lobo* ‘wolf’, and *mona* ‘she-monkey’ are associated with drunkenness, and *ratón* ‘mouse’ with hangover.

sense, often implying immaturity and helplessness (p. 87). Farmyard animals referring to women are often linked to servitude or sexual (un)attractiveness⁶, whereas names of wild animals, which are mostly associated with negative evaluations, often carry connotations of danger (for instance, *loba* / 'she-wolf') or physical appearance (*foca* / 'seal'; *morsa* / 'whalrus'; etc.).

Haslam et al. (2011) conducted two surveys among Australian university students (60 and 72 participants, respectively) exploring the level of offensiveness of different animal metaphors based on their content and the context in which they are used. They found that the use of the animal metaphors involving more disliked animals, as well as those which present targets as literally less than human (thereby being more dehumanizing⁷), are particularly offensive. Furthermore, the results confirmed that a number of contextual factors also plays a role when it comes to the offensiveness of such expressions.⁸ As for the content, they reported that it mainly revolved around the description of targets as depraved, disagreeable or lacking intelligence.

Silaški (2014) conducted another research related to the use and perception of animal names describing people in Serbian, asking 60 young adults (male and female) to choose from 20 animal names those they would use to refer to a woman (either in a positive or negative way), and list the meanings they associate with each of them. The results indicate that animal names which are most commonly used in reference to women in a negative sense in Serbian are *krmača* 'sow', *kokoška* 'hen', *guska* 'goose', *zmija* 'snake', and *ćurka* 'turkey'. Certain differences between male and female responses regarding the perceived meaning associated with some animal names have also been noted.⁹

Matusz (2019) explored the frequency of use of animal metaphors as insults in English based on a corpus consisting of 103 movies, and found that over a quarter of the analyzed movie scenes representing examples of verbal aggression contained the use of animal-based insults.

In their study of offensive tweets in Arabic, Mubarak et al. (2021) found that the most common way of insulting the target on Twitter using this language is by calling it an animal name. The most frequently used animal names were *dog*, *donkey* and *beast*.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research questions

In line with the stated goals, the present study aimed to answer the following research questions:

⁶ For instance, *vaca* 'cow'; *vaguilla* 'heifer', *yegua* 'mare', etc.

⁷ Comparing people to pigs is highly offensive mainly due to the transfer of dislike from this animal to the target, whereas comparing them to chimpanzees is primarily based on the concept of dehumanization (see Haslam et al. 2011: 322).

⁸ While the use of animal metaphors for out-group members is typically seen as hostile, their use for in-group members is often interpreted as jocular. Furthermore, the offensiveness increased if the target was female, and if the tone was hostile (Haslam et al. 2011).

⁹ For instance, the male respondents associated *kučka* 'bitch' with promiscuous woman, whereas the female respondents would use this animal name to describe "shallow, conceited or frivolous woman"; female respondents associated *svinja* 'pig' with a fat woman, and male respondents linked it with an untidy or sloppy woman; etc. (Silaški 2014: 329).

- 1) *What animal names do speakers of Bosnian most commonly use as insults to refer to a male and female person?*
- 2) *Which of those animal names do they view as the most / the least insulting?*
- 3) *What negative meanings do they associate with the animal names most commonly used as insults?*
- 4) *What gender-linked differences related to the use and perception of animal names as insults can be found in Bosnian?*

3.2 Method and study design

While the study is to a large extent qualitative, elements of the quantitative approach have also been used, primarily in regard to potential gender-linked differences in the use and perception of animal names as insults. Two anonymous online surveys¹⁰ were conducted among Bosnian university students incorporating both open-ended and closed-ended questions.

The aim of the first survey was to find out what animal names are commonly used as male-directed and female-directed insults in Bosnian. To achieve this goal, the participants were asked to think of a male and, in the next question, of a female person who insulted or hurt them profoundly, and then to use an animal name to describe the male and the female person, respectively.¹¹

Ten most commonly used animal names obtained in the first survey (five for each gender) were then used to create the second survey, which was aimed at establishing their level of offensiveness, negative meanings associated with each of those animal names, and potential gender-related differences in this regard. When exploring negative meanings that the survey participants typically link with specific animal names, the thematic parts /categories used by Halupka-Rešetar & Radić (2003) were utilized, with minor modifications.¹² In addition to questions about the age, gender, and affiliation of the respondents, the second survey included the following closed-ended questions (formulated in Bosnian):

Which of the following animal names, when used as insults in reference to men / to women do you find the most / the least insulting?¹³ (Offered answers: five animal names most commonly used in reference to men / women in the first survey.)

Which of the offered negative meanings do you think is the closest in meaning to the following animal name when used as an insult in reference to men /to women? (Offered answers: a) ugly, fat, messy, or some other word which describes physical appearance; b) stupid, fool, or some other word which describes lack of intelligence; c) evil, corrupted, bad, or some other word which describes bad character; d) primitive, uncultured, or some other word which describes lack of manners.)

¹⁰ The surveys were created using the platform <https://freeonlinesurveys.com/>. Survey links were sent via email to students from different study programs. Around 60% of the contacted students completed the first survey, whereas the second survey was completed by around 35% of those contacted, most likely because it was significantly longer than the first one.

¹¹ In addition to these two questions, the first survey also included those related to the respondents' age, gender, and affiliation.

¹² The category of *eating habits* is changed into *lack of manners*. Namely, when animal names are used as insults in reference to people's eating habits, this is typically related to their lack of manners (for instance, "he eats like a pig"), but the category of *lack of manners* is much wider than just *eating habits*. The other three categories (*appearance*, *intelligence*, and *character*) were used in the same form.

¹³ The respondents were asked to single out the most and the least insulting one.

When considering gender-linked differences in the perception and use of animal names as insults in both surveys, the chi square test of independence was applied.¹⁴

3.3 Participants

The surveys were taken by two different groups of respondents. The respondents in both surveys were undergraduate university students from different study programs at University of Zenica (central Bosnia-Herzegovina). They all belong to the age group of young adults (18 – 25 years old) and their mother tongue is Bosnian. There was no particular reason to select these respondents, other than their availability. The first survey was taken by 142 (88 female and 54 male), and the second one by 61 (36 female and 25 male) respondents.¹⁵

4 Results and Discussion

This section is divided into three subsections. The first one presents and discusses the results of the first survey – animal names used by the participants to refer to the most disliked male and female persons. The second and the third one deal with negative meanings associated with those animal names and their level of offensiveness, respectively. In each subsection potential gender-related differences are also explored.

4.1 Animal names as insults in Bosnian (first survey)

4.1.1 Animal names used to refer to a despised male person

Out of 142 survey participants, 141 provided valid responses when asked to use a single animal name to describe a male person who deeply offended or hurt them (or who they view as the most reprehensible for whatever reason). While a total of 20 different animal names¹⁶ were used, most of the respondents (74.46%) provided one of the following three: *konj* ‘horse’, by far the most common; *svinja* ‘pig’ and *majmun* ‘monkey’. Interestingly, while only seven domestic animal names were mentioned, the results show (Table 1) that three of them fall into the five animal names which are most commonly used as insults by the survey respondents.

¹⁴ The chi square test was done using a calculation tool at <http://www.quantpsy.org/chisq/chisq.htm>.

¹⁵ The disparity between male and female respondents is accidental – for some reason, female students were more willing to take the survey when the survey link was sent to them.

¹⁶ Different variants of the same animal name have been counted as one name. While all the variants mentioned by the survey participants are listed in the tables, only the most common one for each animal name is used in the rest of the paper.

Table 1: Animal names which the survey participants used in reference to a male person who hurt or insulted them profoundly

	Animal names	Mentions (%)
1.	<i>konj, konjina</i> ¹⁷ ‘horse’	66 (46.80%)
2.	<i>svinja, krme, krmak</i> ¹⁸ ‘pig’ / ‘swine’)	‘21 (14.89%
3.	<i>majmun</i> ‘monkey’	18 (12.76%)
4.	<i>pas, pseto, pašče</i> ¹⁹ ‘dog’	6 (4.25%)
5.	<i>medvjed, meded</i> ²⁰ ‘bear’	5 (3.54%)
6.	<i>magarac</i> ‘donkey’	4 (2.83%)
7.	<i>zmija</i> ‘snake’	3 (2.12%)
Other (2 mentions each)	<i>nilski konj</i> ‘hippopotamus’; <i>pacov, štakor</i> ²¹ ‘rat’; <i>akrep</i> ‘scorpion’; <i>hijena</i> ‘hyena’; <i>ljenjivac</i> ‘sloth’	
Other (1 mention each)	<i>junac</i> ‘steer’; <i>džudžan</i> ‘weasel’; <i>stoka</i> ‘cattle’; <i>bik</i> ‘bull’; <i>crv</i> ‘worm’; <i>žohar</i> ‘cockroach’; <i>činčila</i> ‘chinchilla’; <i>morž</i> ‘walrus’	

Regarding gender-related differences in the offensive use of animal names which are male-directed, the results indicate that female respondents are more likely to use the word *svinja* ‘pig’, and less likely to use the word *majmun* ‘monkey’ than their male counterparts. However, the results of a chi square test of independence performed for the three most commonly used animal names in reference to male targets (*konj* / ‘horse’, *svinja* / ‘pig’, and *majmun* / ‘monkey’) show that statistical significance of the above difference cannot be confirmed ($p = 0.058$). As shown in Table 2, the male respondents used 15, and the female respondents 17 animal names, and in both groups over two-thirds of respondents used one of the three above-mentioned animal names.

Table 2: Animal names used in reference to male targets (male vs female respondents)

	Male respondents (53) (animal name / mentions (%))	Female respondents (88) (animal name / mentions (%))
1.	<i>konj</i> ‘horse’ 23 (42.5%)	<i>konj</i> ‘horse’ 43 (48.8%)
2.	<i>majmun</i> ‘monkey’ 10 (18.5%)	<i>svinja</i> ‘pig’ 17 (19.3%)
3.	<i>svinja</i> ‘pig’ 4 (7.4%)	<i>majmun</i> ‘monkey’ 8 (9%)
4.	<i>medvjed</i> ‘bear’ 3 (5.5%)	<i>magarac</i> ‘donkey’ 4 (4.5%)
5.	<i>pas</i> ‘dog’ and <i>zmija</i> ‘snake’ 2 (3.7%)	<i>pas</i> ‘dog’ 4 (4.5%)
	other 9	other 12

¹⁷ *Konjina* is an augmentative form of *konj* ‘horse’, and it was used three times in this survey.

¹⁸ *Krme* is another name for *svinja* ‘pig’, and both of these names are gender-neutral in Bosnian, whereas the word *krmak* is used for a male pig. In this survey, the word *krme* was used three times, and *krmak* only once.

¹⁹ Both *pašče* and *pseto* are pejorative forms of *pas* ‘dog’, and each of them was used once in this survey.

²⁰ *Meded* is a grammatically incorrect version of *medvjed* ‘bear’, sometimes used intentionally when this animal name is used in reference to people in Bosnian. It was used only once in this survey.

²¹ These are two names for the same animal.

4.1.2 Animal names used to refer to a despised female person

When asked to provide a single animal name in reference to a female person they dislike most, 140 respondents provided valid responses, using a total of 19 animal names (12 domestic and 7 wild ones). Among the five most commonly used animal names, there is only one which relates to wild animals (*zmija* / ‘snake’). As shown in Table 3, the most commonly used animal names, accounting for over two thirds of the collected responses (72.1%), were *krava* ‘cow’, *zmija* ‘snake’ and *koza* ‘she-goat’.

Table 3: Animal names which the survey participants used in reference to a female person who hurt or insulted them profoundly

	Animal names	Mentions (%)
1.	<i>krava</i> ‘cow’	42 (30%)
2.	<i>zmija</i> ‘snake’	30 (21.4%)
3.	<i>koza</i> ‘she-goat’	29 (20.7%)
4.	<i>kobila</i> ‘mare’	15 (10.7%)
5.	<i>kučka</i> ‘bitch’	7 (5%)
Other (2 mentions each)	<i>svinja</i> , <i>krme</i> ‘pig’, ‘swine’; <i>konj</i> ‘horse’	
Other (1 mention each)	<i>čaplja</i> ‘heron’; <i>ovca</i> ‘sheep’; <i>ameba</i> ‘amoeba’; <i>žirafa</i> ‘giraffe’; <i>kokoška</i> ‘hen’; <i>krpelj</i> ‘tick’; <i>pacov</i> ‘rat’; <i>ćurka</i> ‘turkey’; <i>crna mačka</i> ‘black cat’; <i>kenja</i> ‘jenny’; <i>kobra</i> ‘cobra’; <i>pudlica</i> ‘poodle’; <i>pekinezer</i> ‘pekingese’	

It is interesting to note that, despite the fact that Serbian and Bosnian are very similar languages, the animal names which are, according to Silaški (2014), most commonly used as insults in reference to women in Serbian (*krmača* / ‘sow’, *kokoška* / ‘hen’, *guska* / ‘goose’, *zmija* / ‘snake’, and *ćurka* / ‘turkey’ were, with the exception of *zmija* ‘snake’, very rarely used for the same purpose by the Bosnian survey participants.

As for the gender-linked differences in the use of female-directed animal names as insults, the results show that such differences do exist, and, according to the results of a chi square test of independence performed for the four animal names most commonly used by both groups, they are statistically significant ($p = 0.032$). The most striking difference is observed with respect to the use of the word *zmija* (‘snake’), which was much more used by the female respondents. Additionally, the male respondents seem to be more likely to use the words *kobila* ‘mare’ and *kučka* ‘bitch’, and less likely to use the word *koza* ‘she-goat’ referring to female targets than the female respondents.

Table 4: Animal names used in reference to female targets (male vs female respondents)

	Male respondents (52) (animal name / mentions (%))	Female respondents (88) (animal name / mentions (%))
1.	<i>krava</i> ‘cow’ 16 (30.7%)	<i>krava</i> ‘cow’ 26 (29.5%)
2.	<i>kobila</i> ‘mare’ 9 (17.3%)	<i>zmija</i> ‘snake’ 24 (27.2%)
3.	<i>koza</i> ‘she-goat’ 7 (13.4%)	<i>koza</i> ‘she-goat’ 22 (25%)
4.	<i>zmija</i> ‘snake’ 6 (11.5%)	<i>kobila</i> ‘mare’ 6 (6.8%)
5.	<i>kučka</i> ‘bitch’ 6 (11.5%)	
	other 8	other 10

The results of the first survey also show that the some animal names can be used in a derogatory way in Bosnian in reference to both male and female targets, but this is not common. They include *pacov* ‘rat’ (used twice in reference to male targets, and once in reference to a female); *zmija* ‘snake’ (primarily used in reference to female targets, but also used three times to refer to a male), and *svinja* or *krme* ‘pig’, ‘swine’ (mostly used in reference to male targets). As for the pairs of the same animal, the most commonly used animal names by the survey participants were *konj* ‘horse’ – *kobila* ‘mare’ and *pas* ‘dog’ – *kučka* ‘bitch’.

4.2 Negative meanings associated with different animal names (second survey)

4.2.1 Animal names used in reference to male targets

According to the obtained results (see Table 5), the survey participants mostly associate the offensive use of the word *konj* ‘horse’ with meanings which relate to a lack of manners or, to a lesser extent, a lack of intelligence; *majmun* ‘monkey’ with a lack of intelligence, and then a lack of manners; *svinja* ‘pig’ with physical appearance, *pas* ‘dog’ with bad character or a lack of manners, and *medvjed* ‘bear’ with physical appearance or a lack of manners. Based on these results, we can conclude that a lack of manners is a single most important negative quality which the respondents associate with the abusive use of these animal names in reference to men, as it appears to be significantly present in four out of the five animal names. On the other hand, bad character is associated with only one of the covered animal names (*pas* / ‘dog’, whereas a reference to physical appearance is strongly or significantly present in two of them (*svinja* / ‘pig’ and *medvjed* / ‘bear’).

Table 5: Negative meanings which the survey participants associate with the five animal names most commonly used in reference to male targets

	Lack of intelligence	Lack of manners	Physical appearance	Bad character
<i>konj</i> 'horse'	22 (36%)	34 (55.7%)	3 (4.9%)	2 (3.2%)
<i>svinja</i> 'pig'	1 (1.6%)	2 (3.2%)	49 (80.3%)	9 (14.7%)
<i>majmun</i> 'monkey'	32 (52.4%)	21 (34.4%)	1 (1.6%)	7 (11.4%)
<i>pas</i> 'dog'	12 (19.6%)	18 (29.5%)	5 (8.1%)	26 (42.6%)
<i>medvjed</i> 'bear'	8 (13.1%)	23 (37.7%)	25 (40.9%)	5 (8.1%)

Although, as presented in Table 6, minor gender-related differences in the perception of negative meanings associated with the use of animal names in reference to male targets have been noted (for instance, male respondents seem to be more likely to associate the word *pas* 'dog' with bad character and *medvjed* 'bear' with a lack of manners than their female counterparts), no statistically significant differences in this regard have been recorded for any of the analyzed animal names.²²

Table 6: Negative meanings associated with the five animal names most commonly used in reference to male targets (male vs female respondents)

	Lack of intelligence (<i>M</i> vs <i>F</i> respondents)		Lack of manners (<i>M</i> vs <i>F</i>)		Physical appearance (<i>M</i> vs <i>F</i>)		Bad character (<i>M</i> vs <i>F</i>)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>
<i>konj</i> 'horse'	11 (44%)	11 (31%)	13 (52%)	21 (58%)	-	3 (8%)	1 (4%)	1 (3%)
<i>svinja</i> 'pig'	-	1 (3%)	-	2 (6%)	22 (88%)	27 (75%)	3 (12%)	6 (17%)
<i>majmun</i> 'monkey'	12 (48%)	20 (56%)	11 (44%)	10 (28%)	-	1 (3%)	2 (8%)	5 (14%)
<i>pas</i> 'dog'	7 (28%)	5 (14%)	5 (20%)	13 (36%)	-	5 (14%)	13 (52%)	13 (36%)
<i>medvjed</i> 'bear'	3 (12%)	5 (14%)	12 (48%)	11 (31%)	9 (36%)	16 (44%)	1 (4%)	4 (11%)

4.2.2 Animal names used in reference to female targets

Regarding the negative meanings associated with the five animal names most commonly used as insults in reference to women, the results indicate (Table 7) that *zmija* 'snake' and *kučka* 'bitch' are prevalently associated with bad character; *koza* 'she-goat' mostly with a lack of intelligence (and somewhat with a lack of manners); *krava* 'cow' with physical appearance and, to a lesser degree, a lack of intelligence and manners; and *kobila* 'mare' firstly with a lack of intelligence, and then a lack of manners and physical appearance.

²² When performing chi square tests, two most commonly selected categories for *konj* 'horse', *majmun* 'monkey' and *medvjed* 'bear', as well as three most frequently selected categories for *pas* 'dog', were compared.

Table 7: Negative meanings which the survey participants associate with the five animal names most commonly used in reference to female targets

	Lack of intelligence	Lack of manners	Physical appearance	Bad character
<i>krava</i> ‘cow’	16 (26.2%)	11 (18%)	31 (50.8%)	3 (4.9%)
<i>zmija</i> ‘snake’	2 (3.2%)	-	2 (3.2%)	57 (93.4%)
<i>koza</i> ‘she-goat’	39 (63.9%)	18 (29.5%)	4 (6.5%)	-
<i>kobila</i> ‘mare’	25 (40.9%)	17 (27.8%)	17 (27.8%)	2 (3.2%)
<i>kučka</i> ‘bitch’	2 (3.2%)	12 (19.6%)	5 (8.1%)	42 (68.8%)

Some gender-related differences in the perception of the negative qualities associated with the abusive use of the animal names *krava* ‘cow’ and *kobila* ‘mare’ have been noted (female respondents seem to associate them with physical appearance more than their male counterparts), but they are not statistically significant according to the performed chi square tests. However, in the case of the perceived negative meanings of the animal name *koza* ‘she-goat’, there is a statistically significant difference between male and female responses ($p=0.02$).²³ Namely, while the male respondents mostly associate it with a lack of intelligence, a significant number of the female respondents linked it with a lack of manners (see Table 8).

Table 8: Negative meanings associated with the five animal names most commonly used in reference to female targets (male vs female respondents)

	Lack of intelligence (<i>M</i> vs <i>F</i> respondents)		Lack of manners (<i>M</i> vs <i>F</i>)		Physical appearance (<i>M</i> vs <i>F</i>)		Bad character (<i>M</i> vs <i>F</i>)	
<i>krava</i> ‘cow’	6 (24%)	10 (28%)	6 (24%)	5 (14%)	11 (44%)	20 (56%)	2 (8%)	1 (3%)
<i>zmija</i> ‘snake’	2 (8%)	-	-	-	1 (4%)	1 (3%)	22 (88%)	35 (97%)
<i>koza</i> ‘she-goat’	19 (76%)	20 (55%)	3 (12%)	15 (42%)	3 (12%)	1 (3%)	-	-
<i>kobila</i> ‘mare’	11 (44%)	14 (39%)	7 (28%)	10 (28%)	5 (20%)	12 (33%)	2 (8%)	-
<i>kučka</i> ‘bitch’	-	2 (6%)	4 (16%)	8 (22%)	3 (12%)	2 (6%)	18 (72%)	24 (67%)

If we compare the negative meanings of the animal names which are most frequently used as insults in reference to male targets (over 70% of the first survey respondents used the animal names *konj* / ‘horse’, *svinja* / ‘pig’, or *majmun* / ‘monkey’) with those which are female-directed (over 70% of the first survey respondents used the animal names *krava* / ‘cow’, *zmija*

²³ When performing a chi square test, the categories of lack of intelligence and lack of manners were compared for this animal name.

/ ‘snake’, and *koza* / ‘she-goat’), the most notable difference is that a reference to bad character is significantly present only among female-directed insults of this kind. On the other hand, a reference to a lack of manners is generally more evident when animal names are used to refer to male targets.

4.3 The level of offensiveness of animal names used as insults (second survey)

4.3.1 Animal names used in reference to male targets

The results of the second survey indicate that the respondents perceive *svinja* ‘pig’ as the most offensive animal name used in reference to male targets, which, in line with Haslam et al. (2011), could be explained by a general dislike for this animal. As for the other four animal names, there is no conclusive evidence that any of them is significantly more or less offensive than the others (see Table 9). The most probable explanation for this could be that the speaker’s intention to offend is a crucial factor, and it makes little difference which animal name is used.

Table 9: Which of the five animal names most commonly used in reference to male targets do the survey participants perceive as the most and the least offensive?

	The most offensive	The least offensive
1.	<i>svinja</i> ‘pig’ 34 (56%)	<i>konj</i> ‘horse’ 22 (36%)
2.	<i>konj</i> ‘horse’ 9 (15%)	<i>medvjed</i> ‘bear’ 21 (34%)
3.	<i>majmun</i> ‘monkey’ 9 (15%)	<i>majmun</i> ‘monkey’ 9 (15%)
4.	<i>medvjed</i> ‘bear’ 6 (10%)	<i>pas</i> ‘dog’ 9 (15%)
5.	<i>pas</i> ‘dog’ 3 (5%)	<i>svinja</i> ‘pig’ 0

As shown in Table 10, there is no significant difference in this regard between the responses of the male and female respondents.

Table 10: Which of the five animal names most commonly used in reference to male targets do the survey participants perceive as the most and the least offensive (male vs female respondents)?

	The most offensive M vs F		The least offensive M vs F	
1.	<i>pig</i> 16 (64%)	<i>pig</i> 18 (50%)	<i>horse</i> 11 (44%)	<i>bear</i> 12 (33%)
2.	<i>monkey</i> 4 (16%)	<i>horse</i> 7 (19%)	<i>bear</i> 9 (36%)	<i>horse</i> 11 (31%)
3.	<i>dog</i> 2 (8%)	<i>monkey</i> 5 (14%)	<i>dog</i> 3 (12%)	<i>monkey</i> 7 (19%)
4.	<i>horse</i> 2 (8%)	<i>bear</i> 5 (14%)	<i>monkey</i> 2 (8%)	<i>dog</i> 6 (17%)
5.	<i>bear</i> 1 (4%)	<i>dog</i> 1 (3%)	<i>pig</i> 0	<i>pig</i> 0

4.3.2 Animal names used in reference to female targets

Regarding the level of offensiveness of the five animal names which are most commonly used as insults in reference to female targets, the results of the second survey (Table 11) clearly show that the respondents view *kučka* ‘bitch’ as the most insulting, and *koza* ‘she-goat’ as the

least insulting of those animal names. Furthermore, the animal name *zmija* ‘snake’ seems to be perceived as slightly less offensive than *kobila* ‘mare’ or *krava* ‘cow’, and far less offensive than *kučka* ‘bitch’. What we can infer from these results is that negative qualities associated with particular animal names do not directly affect the offensiveness of those names.

Table 11: Which of the five animal names most commonly used in reference to female targets do the survey participants perceive as the most and the least offensive?

	The most offensive	The least offensive
1.	<i>kučka</i> ‘bitch’ 48 (79%)	<i>koza</i> ‘she-goat’ 34 (56%)
2.	<i>kobila</i> ‘mare’ 6 (10%)	<i>zmija</i> ‘snake’ 17 (28%)
3.	<i>krava</i> ‘cow’ 5 (8%)	<i>krava</i> ‘cow’ 7 (11%)
4.	<i>zmija</i> ‘snake’ 2 (3%)	<i>kučka</i> ‘bitch’ 2 (3%)
5.	<i>koza</i> ‘she-goat’ 0	<i>kobila</i> ‘mare’ 1 (2%)

Only minor, statistically insignificant differences between the responses of the male and female respondents have been recorded regarding this issue (see Table 12).

Table 12: Which of the five animal names most commonly used in reference to female targets do the survey participants perceive as the most and the least offensive (male vs female respondents)?

	The most offensive M vs F		The least offensive M vs F	
1.	<i>bitch</i> 19 (76%)	<i>bitch</i> 29 (81%)	<i>she-goat</i> 11 (44%)	<i>she-goat</i> 23 (64%)
2.	<i>mare</i> 3 (12%)	<i>mare</i> 3 (8%)	<i>snake</i> 7 (28%)	<i>snake</i> 10 (28%)
3.	<i>cow</i> 2 (8%)	<i>cow</i> 3 (8%)	<i>cow</i> 5 (20%)	<i>cow</i> 2 (6%)
4.	<i>snake</i> 1 (4%)	<i>snake</i> 1 (3%)	<i>mare</i> 1 (4%)	<i>bitch</i> 1 (3%)
5.	<i>she-goat</i> 0	<i>she-goat</i> 0	<i>bitch</i> 1 (4%)	<i>mare</i> 0

5 Conclusion

This study investigated the abusive use of animal names in Bosnian, based on the results of two online surveys conducted among Bosnian university students. The results indicate that the majority of the respondents (over 70%) used only three animal names as insults for each gender: *konj* ‘horse’, *svinja* ‘pig’ or *majmun* ‘monkey’ as male-directed; and *krava* ‘cow’, *zmija* ‘snake’ or *koza* ‘she-goat’ as female directed insults. Statistically significant differences between the responses of the male and female respondents have been noted in the latter case, as the female respondents were more inclined to use the word *zmija* ‘snake’, and less likely to use the word *kobila* ‘mare’ than their male counterparts. While a total of 39 animal names have been used by the survey participants (20 male-directed and 19 female-directed), most of them were used just once or twice, which indicates that their use is not common.

Regarding the negative meanings associated with the five most commonly used animal names in reference to male targets (*konj* / 'horse', *svinja* / 'pig', *majmun* / 'monkey', *medvjed* / 'bear', *pas* / 'dog'), the results indicate that a combination of different negative qualities is associated with most of them (a lack of manners combined with a lack of intelligence, bad character or physical appearance), the only exception being the word *svinja* ('pig'), which the respondents prevalently associated with physical appearance. As for the five animal names most frequently used as insults in reference to women (*krava* / 'cow', *zmija* / 'snake', *koza* / 'she-goat', *kobila* / 'mare', *kučka* / 'bitch'), two of them (*zmija* / 'snake' and *kučka* / 'bitch') are prevalently associated with a bad character, one (*koza* / 'she-goat') mostly with a lack of intelligence, whereas the remaining two are associated with a combination of different negative qualities (*krava* / 'cow' with a lack of intelligence and manners, and *kobila* / 'mare' with a lack of intelligence, manners and physical appearance). Based on these results, we can conclude that female-directed insults of this kind put more stress on bad character, and less on a lack of manners than those which are male-directed. With the exception of the animal name *koza* / 'she-goat', no statistically significant gender-related differences in the perception of negative meanings associated with different animal names have been noted.

In regard to the level of offensiveness of the five most commonly used male-directed animal names, the results indicate that only *svinja* 'pig' stands out as particularly offensive, whereas the difference between the other four is not clear-cut. On the other hand, when it comes to female-directed abusive use of animal names, we can conclude, based on the obtained results, that *kučka* 'bitch' is the most and *koza* 'she-goat' the least offensive one (out of the five which were most commonly used). According to the obtained results, there are no significant differences between the male and female respondents in the perception of offensiveness of different animal names used as insults.

A limitation of this study is that all the survey participants belonged to the same social (university students) and age group (young adults). Therefore, the exploration of the use and perception of animal names as insults among different age and social groups could be a topic of further research in this area.

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