

Three generational bearers' diverging perception on nicknames in Rokan Hulu, Riau

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ABSTRACT

There is an increasing interest and study regarding nicknames in the last decade. Names serve as more than mere symbols and can represent social standing, ethnicity and contribute to social structures. Nicknames often time can reflect a person's personality, occupation and even ancestry, it also has been given to people for a very long time in many different cultures, while also fostering a sense of closeness and familiarity among individuals. This study is held in purpose of investigating the custom of intergenerational nicknaming custom of Rokan Hulu, Riau and to understand the influence it has regarding the perception of its bearer of three generation of people in Rokan Hulu, Riau. The study utilized a descriptive qualitative research method to explore the significance of nicknames, analyzing literature regarding the topic, and utilizing a Google Form questionnaire to gather data on the date of birth, meanings, and reasons behind these nicknames. The study reveals that Nickname practices in Rokan Hulu, Riau, have various features, including physical, behavioral, habitual, and place features. These nicknames create different perceptions among generations, with older generations accepting them as part of their identity, while millennials stood within a junction between accepting the name or view them as insults, and Gen Z totally view them as mockery or insults.



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I. INTRODUCTION

There is an increasing interest in the study of nicknames especially in the last decade both in linguistics area and in interdisciplinary area (Imayo et al., 2022). This study was held to investigate the custom of intergenerational nicknames usage by the people of three generations in Rokan Hulu, Riau with the purpose to understand the influence it has regarding the perception of its bearer of three generation of people in Rokan Hulu. There is a rich cultural legacy and tradition in the Rokan Hulu Regency in the Indonesian province of Riau. In the midst

of the diverse ecosystems and lush landscapes, the people of Rokan Hulu have developed unique traditions and practices that are passed down from parent to child, which is using implicit nicknaming that has a significant influence on forming social connections and the community's identity (Lam, 2019; Zhou, et al, 2021).

It is significant to name or refer to something, especially humans as it sets one thing apart from another, like in the case of humans and the innate name for any item, creature, or anything (Tur & Sari, 2019). It might be used in an implicit sense that is more expansive, especially in the names whose meanings are not immediately clear (Jalil et al., 2021). Names serve as more than mere symbols, they represent one's social standing, achievements, entitlements, and contribute to the structure of society that can represent a person's ethnic background, their position in society, or their social standing (Uğur, 2017), all of which are seen to carry social significance (Dianitami et al., 2023). Naming practices are also an important cultural practice that can carry cultural and religious significance rather than just simply a way for identifying different individual and highly related to familial and community identities (Persulesy et al., 2023).

Nicknames have been given to people for a very long time in many different cultures (Artamova & Ivanenko, 2022; Ibrahim, 2022). They are often used to identify different people in a group, while at the same time, it can symbolize ethnicity, social status, or social reputation, all of which are believed to carry social importance (Tur, Munandar, & Winarti, 2023). Dianitami et al. (2023) mentioned that nicknames foster a sense of closeness and familiarity among individuals, while also having diverse social purposes within certain sociolinguistic domains and cultural settings and can be analyzed using a structural, functional, psychodynamic, or socio-historical perspective. In Rokan Hulu, these nicknames have deeper significance and implications than just being a way to identify people from one another.

Oftentimes, these items reflect a person's personality, occupation, or even ancestry. These nicknames are frequently passed down from one generation to the next, serving as an essential link between the past and the present (Ibrahim, 2022; Tur, Munandar, & Winarti, 2023). In Indonesia, there various example of such example such as *Raden* in Javanese culture, which can mean as a degree coming from *Kesultanan*, or *La Ode* and *Wa Ode* from Muna & Buton communities in South Sulawesi that can mean as heroic degrees or as simply as a respectful prayer to be use in their child's name (Jalil et al., 2021).

Legacy and customary name Traditions are significant (Dzhumamukhambetova et al, 2024). They vary greatly throughout cultures, faiths, and eras and can be influenced by things like cultural identification, historical background, familial customs, and religious beliefs (Persulesy et al., 2023). In Rokan Hulu, the use of nicknames is deeply embedded in the social and cultural landscape of the area. Nicknames are frequently used in informal settings, like social gatherings and daily conversations (Moore et al, 2020). They serve as a vehicle for building rapport and fostering a sense of belonging in the neighborhood. Moreover, these names can also be used to show respect or admiration for a person's achievements or qualities (Archer, 2019).

The study conducted by Dianitami et al. (2023) showed that nicknames especially from East Java have varied sources namely appearance such as *ndut* which represent a person with unideal body weight or *jemblug* which represent individual with puffy cheeks, characteristics such as *inces* that represent a picky and princess like characters, their relation as family member such as *ler* which is derived from the word *dulur* which means 'bro/brother, or even a real name pun such as *enji* that came from the name 'Angelica', this study found that nicknames can function as a sort of intimacy, or a way to ridicule or even bully others if the nicknames does not indicate or depict the reality of the individual its represents. Matfunjwa et al. (2024) also showed that nicknames, especially from Swati Clans, can originate from domestic responsibilities, an individual's conduct or routine, and their physical characteristics. Some nicknames are derived from the names or surnames of notable individuals, significant historical events, and the names and surnames of those who wear them. Certain nicknames that are based on individuals' behavior and physical appearance might be considered unpleasant and insulting. In another context, Mensah & Ndimele (2022) found that nicknames given by students to their instructors have communicative meanings that can be either favorable or negative, depending on the students' relationship with the lecturers. Nicknames that are positive or neutral are given to individuals based on their intelligence, looks, exceptional lecture delivery, and other personal qualities that strengthen the social connection and network between students and their professors. Conversely, negative or derogatory nicknames are typically disliked and unappealing and are given to individuals due to their lack of skill as well as physical or behavioral defects. Through this study we try to reveal what are the nicknames used by three generations of people in Rokan Hulu, Riau and what are the perceptions express by their bearers.

II. METHOD

This study employed descriptive qualitative research method to examines and understands the importance of the problem that assign to a social or human issues (Tur et al., 2023; Nurazizah, et al, 2024). The research proceeded with a literature study regarding the topics of nicknames, including the previous study and the limitations of the research. The data were gathered by using a Google Form questionnaire, which consisted of date of birth, nicknames, the meaning of said nicknames, and the reason behind those nicknames. The questionnaire was spread out to 450 people in Rokan Hulu. Then, the data were categorized based on the years of birth and divided into 3 groups: the 1980s (Old Generation), 1990–2000s (Millennials), and 2000–2010s (Gen-Z). Researchers analyzed the data to find the linguistic features found in nicknames and figured out the responses received from the bearers related to the nicknames to gain an indication of verbal bullying or intimidation. Finally, the data were written down and drawn for conclusions.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section provides an analysis and examination of the data. The collected data shows that the nicknames have different features and reasons behind their use. There are mainly 2 nicknames that represent both genders, namely Ukok for males with a total of 13 data points

and Utet for females with a total of 14 data points, along with various meanings behind them. There are 27 data points in total, with 9 data points coming from those born in the 1980s, 11 data points from those born in the 1990s–2000s, and lastly, 7 data points from those born in the 2000s–2010s, as shown in Table 1. Nicknames are ubiquitous and can be found in every culture throughout history, which suggests that the process of giving certain individuals nicknames is a widespread custom (Matfunjwa et al., 2024; Putri, Tur, & Sabrina, 2024). Matfunjwa et al (2024) also stated that these nicknames may be acquired and given either by relatives, friends, colleagues, or any associates during the course of an individual's lifetime, alongside their given name, which in a way indicates that almost everybody has one (Tur, 2023). Transgenerational traditions of giving nicknames appear to be a custom that happens frequently, especially among people in the countryside (Pais, 2018).

Table 1. Nicknames and their correlated features

1980s		1990s-2000s		2000s-2010s	
Nicknames	Features	Nicknames	Features	Nickname	Features
Utet Lebar	Physical	Utet Tayap	Physical	Utet Tiang	Physical
Utet Gappual	Physical	Utet Rata	Physical	Utet Mosok	Physical
Utet Sayur	Habitual	Utet Randap	Behavioral	Utet Pano	Physical
Ucok Biru	Physical	Utet Raning	Behavioral	Utet Dayak	Behavioral
Ucok Pangkalan	Place	Utet Katak	Behavioral	Ucok Lolom	Physical
Ucok Ruso	Habitual	Utet Layap	Behavioral	Ucok Mancis	Physical
Ucok Singso	Physical	Utet Pusot	Physical	Ucok Rara	Physical
Ucok Gayo	Physical	Ucok Kote	Behavioral		
Ucok Tanding	Physical	Ucok Goni	Physical		
		Ucok Bange	Behavioral		
		Ucok Bengkel	Place		

The data originated from the 1990s–2000s, the largest grouping among three generations, followed by the 1980s and the 2000s–2010s. There are a total of four features related to the nicknames, namely, physical, habitual, attitude, and place. The physical features that are used as nicknames are shown as the most prominent features across the total data, with 16 data points, followed by 7 data points with behavioral features, 2 data points with habitual features, and 2 data points with place features. Physical features are categorized based on physical attributes such as skin color, body form, physical trauma, or any related physical conditions. Behavioral features are categorized based on the way the bearer behaves or any event that is correlated to the individual with said nicknames. Habitual features are categorized based on habitual or daily activities of the bearer or their relatives, which brand them as such. Lastly, place features are related to the place that is closely connected to the individual with said nicknames.

The data show that across three generations, the custom of nicknaming is still continuing, the only difference that we found is that in 2010s generation, nicknames that based on place and habits are not exist, rather, almost all the data coming from the 2000s - 2010s data are based on physical appearances, which is 6 out of 7 data, with only 1 nickname that based on behavioral feature, which indicate that the people from 2010s generation are more prone to create a derogatory nicknames that use physical appearances as its base and by using the data as the basis, indicating that the latest generation of Rokan Hulu people are more likely to use nickname as a form of rejection, insult, and even belittling other people that show an undesired physical or behavioral features.

Features of the nicknames

Physical features

Nicknames can be recognized as a means of identifying individuals that come into existence as circulated mouth-to-mouth terms, which can assist in the formation of interpersonal identities (Pais, 2018; Zhang, & Patrick, 2021). Nicknames are given to individuals by those closest to them, either family, playmates, friends, or colleagues, which can provide significant societal roles by frequently serving as concise depictions of an individual's personality traits, physical attributes, or notable events from their life (Dianitami et al., 2023). A nickname is bestowed upon an individual who, in some manner, distinguishes themselves from others and consequently becomes the center of attention (Marcondes, Almeida, & Novais, 2020), which may stem from one's behavior or actions, which could be linked to their social standing or physical appearance (Nikolenko, 2023). Nicknames are able to transmit meanings that allow for a large variety of alternative readings, all of which are understood within the context of a set of contextual qualities (Mensah, 2016).

Table 2. Physical feature nicknames and their meanings.

Nicknames	Feature	Meaning
Utet Lebar	Physical	A person with large and fat body
Utet Gappual	Physical	A person that resembles black and white fish known as Gappual Fish
Utet Tayap	Physical	A very thin person that resembles a flat board
Utet Tiang	Physical	A very tall person that resembles an electric pole
Utet Mosok	Physical	A person with dark skin that almost like a charcoal
Utet Rata	Physical	A very dark skin person
Ucok Gayo	Physical	A person that resembles a Crab
Ucok Tanding	Physical	A person that has a fish-head like
Utet Pano	Physical	A person with a lot of fungi skin infection
Utet Pusot	Physical	A person with many hair whirls
Ucok Biru	Physical	A person with bluish skin
Ucok Lolom	Physical	A person with tar-like skin
Ucok Mancis	Physical	A person with body and head that resembles a fire match
Ucok Singso	Physical	A person with a scar that caused by saw machine
Ucok Goni	Physical	A person that resembles a sack
Ucok Rara	Physical	A person with a very light skin that often getting red under the sun

The physical features nicknamed in Table 2, which appear as the most frequent data, show that the most distinguishing aspect of an individual mostly comes from their physical appearances, since nicknaming can be a method that reflects how others see and form opinions about each other (Dianitami et al., 2023) or as a way to linked a person to their physical characteristics (Matfunjwa et al., 2024). Academically, data shows that the most commonly used monikers or nicknames are those pertaining to the physical or anatomical aspects (Pais, 2018).

The color of the skin seems to be an identifier to create a nickname. *Utet Rata*, *Utet Mosok*, and *Ucok Lolom* are nicknames that refer to both males and females that characterize and represent a dark-colored skin individual. Other physical featured nicknames also attach resemblance to objects such as *Utet Tiang*, which directly translates as a woman that is as tall as an electric pole; *Ucok Goni*, which translates as a male that looks like a sack; or *Ucok Mancis*, which shows that the individual is a male with a body and head that resembles a fire match. Some other nicknames also use animals as a way to depict others: *Utet Gappual* refers to a fish known as Gappual, which has a black and white scale; *Ucok Gayo* refers to a person that resembles a crab; and *Ucok Tanding* refers to the head form of a fish. Physical deformity appears as a form of nickname. *Ucok Singso*, which refers to a man with a scar caused by a saw machine, shows that other people's misfortune can even earn a nickname and become some sort of identity for a person.

Most of these nicknames appear as a form of mockery, which shows disrespectful or offensive manners towards the individual with said nicknames. These nicknames were mostly created as a negative means or a way to critique or even insult someone, both publicly and secretly (Matfunjwa et al., 2024). Physical appearances have been a significant source of nicknames, both positive and negative, contributing to the creation and evolution of many nicknames, which make society prone to pass judgement about others based on aspect of their physical appearances (Mensah, 2020; Dianitami et al., 2023).

Behavioral features

Data shows that some of the nicknames given in Rokan Hulu, which are shown in Table 3, are either related to a certain behavioral trait that closely attaches to its bearer or based on an event that reminds others about the bearer that it started to be a part of their identities. Some of these nicknames are shameful and even directly insult the bearer, while others were given as a sign of despise or awe towards the bearer. These nicknames are used as a way of giving expression, and it is common practice to give a person a nickname based on their patterns of behavior (Khetoa & Mokala, 2022).

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Table 3. Behavioral Feature Nicknames and their meaning

Nicknames	Feature	Meaning
Utet Randap	Behavioral	A person who once drank a poisonous substance known as 'Round Up' as a means of suicide
Utet Raning	Behavioral	A person who recently got rich and love to buy new clothes
Utet Katak	Behavioral	A person that likely to sit like a frog
Ucok Kote	Behavioral	A very strong person
Ucok Bange	Behavioral	A person that used to like to eat a dirt known as bange
Utet Dayak	Behavioral	A person that likes to lay down in almost every situation
Utet Layap	Behavioral	A person that likes to go out and seldomly go home

Utet Randap, which was given to a former suicidal individual; *Utet Raning*, which was given to a woman who recently got rich and loved to shop; and *Utet Bange*, which was given to an individual who used to like to eat dirt, are the nicknames that are closely related to a shameful past or the despicable behavior of the bearer. These nicknames are used as a way to critique and ridicule the bearers, which shows that the bearers are seen in a negative way (Matfunjwa et al., 2024). Other than that, individuals that engage in behaviors that are deemed to be both unwanted and vile are often referred to by nicknames and are spoken with a sense of disdain, while some people might even brand these bearers as toxic individuals (Khetoa & Mokala, 2022).

Other nicknames, such as *Utet Katak*, which refers to a habit of sitting like a frog; *Utet Dayak*, which refers to a habit of laying down on almost every occasion; *Utet Layap*, which is meant to depict the woman who loves to go out and rarely goes home; and *Ucok Kote*, which refers to a very strong individual in terms of physical activity, were given based on how the bearers brought themselves into daily life, and it seems to reflect a memorable resemblance of the bearers. These nicknames were given as a way to either mock the bearers or as a compliment toward the bearer. These eccentricities, which are regarded as uniqueness or oddities, are prone to receiving nicknames from others and could be a sign of humiliation or a way to ridicule the bearers (Mensah & Ndimele, 2022). It shows that nicknames can be used as references that are utilized as means of communication in order to transmit what aspects of a person are regarded as desirable, undesirable, and a form of condemnation by society (Matfunjwa et al., 2024). After all, a nickname conveys a great deal of information about the person who wears it and depending on the context, a nickname can either serve to convey cultural ideas or attitudes, or it might be a reflection of societal expectations toward an individual (Khetoa & Mokala, 2022). Some of these expectations end up as nicknames, indicating that some bad mannerism can earn someone an awful nickname that sticks to them, which can brand them as rejected or a failure within society.

Habitual features

Table 4. Habitual Feature Nicknames and their meaning

Nicknames	Feature	Meaning
Ucok Ruso	Habitual	A person that has a father that used to hunt deer
Utet Sayur	Habitual	A person that likes to sell vegetables despite having another main profession

The nicknames stated in Table 4 are the nicknames that are used simply as a form of identifier. *Ucok Ruso*, which meant to say that the boy is the son of a deer hunter, and *Utet Sayur*, which meant to identify that the lady is the vegetable seller, showed that some nicknames are used simply to separate those with atypical or unique sides of the bearers and use it as a way to 'name' them, because after all, nicknames are used to convey specific and significant information about the person who bears them (Khetoa & Mokala, 2022) and duties, chores, and daily habits can be assigned as a base of nicknames (Matfunjwa et al., 2024).

Place features

Table 5. Place Feature Nicknames and their meaning

Nicknames	Feature	Meaning
Ucok Pangkalan	Place	A person that likely to hang out around the corner of the street with many other people
Ucok Bengkel	Place	A person that works as mechanic and stays in a workshop

Ucok Pangkalan and *Ucok Bengkel*, which respectively refer to the corner of the street and the workshop, show that some nicknames use a place that the bearer usually goes to as the basis of their nicknames. Data show that this type of nickname is used only for males since there is no data on female nicknames using place as a feature. This form of nickname indicates that men in Rokan Hulu are more likely to hang out around with their associates, and the place itself becomes their identity, which indicates that the bearers are so rarely seen outside that place.

Bearer's perception on their nicknames

These nicknames give different perceptions to their bearers (Sabrina & Tur, 2023). Some of the bearers feel belittled by the nicknames given to them, while others simply accept them and even celebrate them (Shih & Rudin, 2020; Borrelli, 2020). These reactions differ even among generations. Individuals from the 1980s generation seem to easily accept and use the nicknames given to them freely. It seems that the 1980s generation thinks of these nicknames as their identities rather than a form of mockery or insult, indicating that people from this generation are more openly accepting their nicknames as their own identity. The name *Gappual* is a very derogatory term to use as a nickname; using an animal, especially a fish, to name a person as such is very insulting. Other than that, *Singso* is a nickname based on the bearer's misfortune, which indicates that the bearer accepted the fact that his scars are now a part of his identity, and despite all that, the bearers simply accepted these nicknames and use them daily. The people from the 1990s–2000s generation have separate perceptions of their nicknames. Some of the bearers accept the nicknames as their identity and embrace them while also using them daily.

Apart from them, the others seem to see these nicknames as mockery, reject them as their identity, and feel insulted every time these nicknames are used, whether by those closest to them or by others. Aside from that, individuals from the 2000s–2010s generation have different perceptions about their nicknames. Given the fact that most of the nicknames are

based on their physical appearance, the bearers see these nicknames as a form of mockery and perceive them as bullying, indicating that people from the 2000s–2010s generation are more knowledgeable about bullying compared to the 1980s and 1990s–2000s generations. They use this knowledge as a form of self-protection mechanism and feel these nicknames as shameful and derogatory, especially when the ones calling them are not the closest to them and reject them. Even if the others keep using these nicknames, it leads the bearers to forcefully accept them and react when called by them.

A bearer of the name *Tiang*, which refers to a woman with a height that resembles an electric pole, is a woman with a taller height compared to other women and even surpasses men in some occasions. Along with the fact that taller women have a hard time forming relationships with the opposite gender, the bearer despises her own nickname. The fact that these names are given by those closest to the bearers makes it worse for them. However, despite the rejection projected by 2000s – 2010s nickname the bearers, these rejections have a different scale based on who call them with such nicknames, it shows that if the callers are people that close to them emotionally or a family member, the rejection seems slightly milder compare when the callers are those who are not close to them emotionally (Nick, 2020), indicating that the nicknames given to them are started to directly attach to their identity, which shows that these nicknames are disturbing and uncomfortable for them, especially for the bearer of *Dayak* nickname, because the bearer feel that this nicknames is not completely true and not precisely represent the bearer's true identity.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study has showed that Nicknaming practices in Rokan Hulu, Riau through 3 generations appear to have various features attach to them namely; physical feature, behavioral feature, habitual feature, and Place feature. These nicknames create perceptions from the bearers that differ across the generations, those from the old generation seems to accept and even use the nicknames as part of their identity. Apart from them, the millennials are separated between those who accept their nicknames and those who despise it. The Gen Z seems to have same perceptions of their nicknames and view them as mockery or insult toward themselves.

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