"STOP THIS NONSENSE, HARRY!": An analysis of impoliteness strategies in cyberbullying commentary targeting Harry Maguire

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Abstract: Cyberbullying encompasses a range of negative online behaviours, including harassment, threats, and insults, which can significantly impact individuals' mental and emotional wellbeing. This study aims to examine the nature and prevalence of impoliteness strategies within cyberbullying commentary targeting Harry Maguire, a prominent figure in the football world. The data consists of 100 purposively selected comments showcasing impoliteness, extracted from the comments section of a post by Maguire, on his official X platform (formerly Twitter) account dated 7th November 2021. Culpeper's (2005) Model of Impoliteness serves as the theoretical framework while a mixed method approach is adopted in this study. Out of the five strategies proposed by Culpeper (2005), this study discovers four strategies present in the selected cyberbullying comments. The findings show that Positive Impoliteness (39.6%) is the most frequently employed strategy, and this is followed by Bald on Record Impoliteness, which represents 27.7% of the total comments. The study concludes that within the digital sports community on the X platform, fans frequently employ strategies of positive impoliteness and bald-on-record impoliteness as a means to challenge the face wants of players, such as Harry Maguire, particularly when their performances are below expectation.

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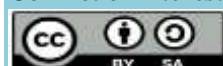
1. Introduction

The proliferation of social media platforms in recent years has completely revolutionised the way people communicate, opening up unprecedented possibilities for connection and interaction (Edosomwan et al., 2011; Kross et al., 2021; Gana & Agu, 2023). However, this technological advancement has also brought up a number of difficulties, including the rise in cyberbullying. Cyberbullying encompasses a range of negative online behaviours, including harassment, threats, and insults, which can significantly impact individuals' mental and emotional wellbeing. Alim (2015: 32) defines cyberbullying as the use of information and communication technology to harass and harm a person, or group of persons, in a deliberate, repetitive, and hostile manner. It involves using digital communication, such as text messages, emails, social media posts, comments, and direct messages to engage in harmful behavior. Citing Kowalski (2008), Indrawan (2018: 2) explains cyberbullying as "an act of bullying which happens in instant messaging, email, chat room, website, video game, or through a picture or message sent through a phone." Taking place in the digital realm rather than a physical one, cyberbullying might not result in physical harm, but it can inflict psychological harm upon the target(s), potentially triggering issues like depression, diminished self-worth, and even the risk of suicide.

Cyberbullying has therefore become a pressing concern in today's digital age, with numerous incidents reported across various online platforms (Tas'adi et al., 2020). One arena where cyberbullying frequently occurs is in the comments section of social media posts by public figures, such as celebrities and athletes. This comments section often becomes a battleground for vitriolic interactions, and sports personalities like Harry Maguire are no exceptions to this trend. Eurosport, a popular sports television network in Europe and parts of Asia, reported in August, 2022 that Manchester United duo Cristiano Ronaldo and Harry Maguire received the most Twitter abuse out of all Premier League players in the 2021-2022 football season. This report highlights that even prominent athletes can be affected by online

harassment and underscores the widespread issue of cyberbullying within the realm of sports and X social media platform.

There has been a scarcity of scholarly endeavours in the field of cyberbullying that employ a linguistic approach to grasp the linguistic attributes and patterns that foster the persistence of cyberbullying and impolite conduct. Indrawan (2018) deployed Culpeper's (2005) impoliteness strategies to analyse cyberbullying comments on Instagram against Jennifer Dunn, a popular Indonesian actress. The result revealed that negative impoliteness strategy was the most predominant strategy deployed by online users to bully the actress. The actress was bullied due to the news of her arrest by the police for the possession of drugs. Supriadi, Gunawan, and Muniroh (2020), using systemic functional linguistic approach, identify legal consequences of cyberbullies' language use as evidenced on Twitter by identifying the attitudinal systems used by the bullies. Anyanwu and Udoh (2021) examined impoliteness in the language use of interlocutors on the internet with the intent of exploring those linguistic usages which denote impoliteness and which consequently result in internet bullying. Ogolla et al. (2023) examined the mitigation strategies Kenyan university students and administrators adopt to help curb cyberbullying. Their study found that students responded to cyberbullying by enhancing their online security, blocking perpetrators of cyberbullying, flagging and reporting offenders, seeking counselling, and taking legal action against them.

Despite growing awareness about the negative impacts of cyberbullying, there is a need to further knowledge on specific linguistic strategies of impoliteness employed in such contexts. This study seeks to address this gap by deploying Culpeper's (2005) Model of Impoliteness to examine the nature and prevalence of impoliteness strategies within cyberbullying comments on X (formerly Twitter) targeting Harry Maguire, a prominent figure in the football world. The specific objectives of the study are to:

i. investigate the nature of impoliteness strategies in selected cyberbullying comments directed at Harry Maguire on X platform;
ii. discover the predominant impoliteness strategies employed in the selected cyberbullying comments; and
iii. examine discursive devices used to convey impoliteness in the selected cyberbullying comments.

2. Brief biography of Harry Maguire

Harry Maguire is an English professional footballer who plays as a center-back for the England national team and Premier League side Manchester United. He is also the captain of United and is renowned to be a strong and authoritative defender. He was born on March 5, 1993, in Sheffield, England. He began his youth football career at Sheffield United, where he progressed through the ranks and made his first-team debut at the age of 18. While pursuing his football career, Maguire also received an education. He attended St. Mary's Catholic High School in Chesterfield and earned a degree in sports science from Sheffield Hallam University. In August 2019, Maguire joined Manchester United in a transfer worth £80 million, another record transfer fee for a defender. He became an instant starter for the team and was named the club's captain in January 2020. Maguire is involved in philanthropic activities and has launched his own charity called "The Harry Maguire Foundation" to support underprivileged children and young people in the UK.. Maguire is married to Fern Hawkins. The couple got married in June 2021, and they have two daughters together (www.sportskeeda.com).

3. Literature review

3.1. The concept of politeness

The word 'polite' is used to refer to a person whose behaviour is respectful irrespective of the way s/he talks and writes. According to Deng and Runqing (1989: 170), the exact meaning of politeness varies among cultures. In Japan, as an example, bowing respectfully is considered a polite behaviour, while in Samoan culture, politeness is linked to the social class and political power. Thus, the word 'polite' can be used to refer to both verbal and non-verbal behaviour (Mey, 2009: 711). Politeness is one of the purposes that language fulfils and it has been the main concern of pragmatics and other fields of study where human politeness matters.

The general definition of linguistic politeness is offered by Boyer (1702) cited in Culpeper and Kadar (2010: 88): "politeness is a dexterous management of our words and actions, whereby we make other people have better opinions of us and themselves". Boyer (1702) embraces both the linguistic and non-linguistic sides of politeness and this is shown clearly with capitalised words he uses in his definition of 'words' and 'actions'. Adegbija (1989: 58) views politeness as associated with situations in which one speaks or behaves in a way that is socially acceptable and pleasant to the hearer. Similarly, Yule (1996: 60) argues that politeness could be treated as a fixed concept, polite social behaviour or etiquette within a culture. This view echoes Holmes' (2009: 711) position that politeness is a strategic interaction aimed at achieving goals such as, avoiding conflicts and maintaining harmonious relationship with others. Mills (2003: 6) takes a more practical approach, affirming that politeness is the expression of the speaker's intention to mitigate face threats carried by certain face threatening acts towards another. Thus, there is a common theme of politeness as a socially appropriate behaviour which runs through these definitions.

Hence, politeness is the art of employing culturally appropriate language and behaviour as a deliberate strategy to nurture harmonious relationships, prevent disputes, and mitigate face threats within interpersonal interactions. Several prominent theories in politeness, include Lakoff (1973), Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), Fraser (1978), Leech (1983), and Locher and Watts (2005). These theories have collectively enriched human understanding of how politeness is manifested in language and the intricate ways in which people manage social interactions through communication

3.2. The concept of impoliteness

Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of politeness paved the way for linguists to explore the phenomenon of impoliteness. Meanwhile, Brown and Levinson presented politeness as a knotty framework applied to soften face threatening acts. Other linguists, including Culpeper (1996, 2005), Bousfield (2008) and Eelen (2001), worked on the other side of politeness. These linguists studied the communicative situations where the speaker's purpose is to damage a hearer's face rather than softening face threatening acts (O'keeffe, Clancy & Adolphs, 2011: 71). Eelen (2001) and Culpeper (1996) observed that while theorists of politeness, such as Fraser (1978), Brown and Levinson (1978), Leech (1983), and Locher and Watts (2005), superficially addressed impoliteness, their primary emphasis in practice was on politeness. As a result, their discussions regarding impoliteness were inadequate and somewhat biased. Simply put, the recent surge of interest in impoliteness stems from the inadequacy of politeness strategies to adequately account for the confrontational interactions within impolite conversations (Locher & Bousfield, 2008: 71).

Mills (2005: 268) defines impoliteness as "any type of linguistic behavior which is assessed as intending to threaten the hearer's face or social identity". Interlocutor's intonation while speaking even should be taken into consideration. Any behaviour or utterance that attacks other's face is called impolite (Mirhosseini, Mardanshahi, & Dowlatabadi, 2017). Culpeper (2005: 38) defines impoliteness as "communicative strategies designed to attack face and thereby cause social conflict and disharmony." Self-damage is attributed as impoliteness. Culpeper (2005: 36) states that "the phenomenon of impoliteness is to do with how offense is communicated and taken."

The most notable model of impoliteness was introduced by Culpeper in 1996. As observed in his model, impoliteness is intended to produce disharmony between interlocutors in social interactions (Walaszewska & Piskorska, 2012: 246). Although his model is based on Brown and Levinson's (1978) Politeness Principle, Culpeper (1996) refutes their view of impoliteness as 'marginal' to everyday conversation. He asserts that understanding the notion of politeness is impossible without comprehending impoliteness phenomenon and, thereby, the analytical framework of impoliteness needs to be improved and receive due consideration (Mullany & Stockwell, 2010: 71).

Culpeper's (1996) model has an advantage over other models as it is built on real life data. It deals with a variety of discourses, starting with conflictive and impolite illocutions in U.S. army training discourse and concluding with impolite interaction within bilingual Spanish/English children's discourse. Therefore, the variety of verbal and written data used by Culpeper (1996) empowers his model and makes it more reliable (Bousfield, 2008: 90). In parallel with Brown and Levinson's (1978) strategies (bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, off record, and do not do the Face-Threatening Acts), Culpeper (1996, 2005) set up five super strategies which will be discussed in the next section of this article.

4.   Research methodology

Culpeper (1996, 2005) distinguishes five strategies by which impoliteness can be created. These strategies are discussed below:

4.1. Bald of record impoliteness

This strategy is employed when there is much face at risk and when a speaker intends to damage the hearer's face and thus the impolite utterance will be performed directly and clearly (Bousfield, 2008, p. 92). Culpeper (2005) uses here the concept of face-attack-act (FAA), in opposition to FTA, in order to identify the face attack where there is a deliberate intention on the part of the speaker (Mullany and Stockwell, 2010: 71). In this strategy, Culpeper (2005: 41) explains that the speaker performs the Face Threatening Act (FTA) in a direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way. It is performed in circumstances where face is not irrelevant or minimised. There is an intention from the speaker to attack the face of the addressee.

4.2. Positive impoliteness

According to Culpeper (2005: 41), this strategy is created to attack the addressee's positive face, where s/he wants to be accepted by others. This strategy can be done through some output strategies such as ignoring the other, excluding the other from an activity, being disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic, using inappropriate identity markers, using obscure or secretive language, seeking disagreement, using taboo words, and calling the other names.

4.3. Negative impoliteness

Culpeper (2005: 41) describes this strategy as the one used to attack the addressee's negative face wants. The speaker uses this strategy to damage the addressee's wants to have freedom of action. The output strategies of negative impoliteness strategies are frightening the other, condescending, scorning or ridiculing, being contemptuous, not treating the other seriously, belittling the other, invading the other's space, explicitly associating the other with a negative aspect, and putting the other's indebtedness on record.

4.4. Off-record impoliteness

This strategy is the replacement of sarcasm or mock politeness which was previously considered as the strategy where the FTA is employed by a means of insincere politeness strategies (Culpeper, 1996: 356). Culpeper (2005: 44) argues

that in off-record impoliteness, the FTA is performed by means of an implicature in a certain way that one attributable intention clearly exceeds any other.

4.5. Withhold politeness

Impoliteness occurs when the absence of politeness work happens at the moment it is expected to show (Culpeper, 2005: 42). Failing to express gratitude or thank somebody for a favour, as shown in the following example, can be considered as deliberate impoliteness. Using the extract from The Clampers, as sourced from the example portrays an adjudicator who has just refused a car owner's appeal against a parking ticket.

   Adjudicator: Well, thank you very much for coming.
   Car owner: I don't thank you at all. (Culpeper et al. 2003: 1559)
   The car owner explicitly withholds politeness by not reciprocating the adjudicator's thanks.

Culpeper (2005) asserts that his study on impoliteness should not be classified as a theory due to the absence of predictive power, as his impoliteness model has not achieved that status yet. According to Culpeper et al. (2003), these super-strategies are typically not observed in isolation; instead, they are frequently combined. Culpeper's (1996, 2005) Model of impoliteness serves as a suitable theoretical framework for this study since it offers a comprehensive model to analyse various impoliteness strategies. Applying it to cyberbullying comments targeting Harry Maguire provides insights into how different linguistic techniques are used to convey impoliteness, and helps to understand the nature and prevalence of such behavior in that context.

5. Methodology

The study adopts a mixed method approach, which includes both qualitative and quantitative approaches, to investigate linguistic impoliteness strategies employed in comments directed at Manchester United player, Harry Maguire on the online social networking platform X (formerly Twitter). While quantitative method helps to quantify the occurrence and proportions of different impoliteness strategies deployed in the comments, qualitative method provides the description and explanation of the nature and prevalence of impoliteness strategies within the cyberbullying commentary (Dawadi, Shrestha & Giri, 2021). The data is extracted from the comments section of a post by Manchester United's captain, Harry Maguire, on his official X account (@HarryMaguire93) dated 7th November, 2021. The post reads:

> "As a group of players we are going through a tough period. We know and accept this is nowhere near good enough. We feel your frustration and disappointment, we are doing everything we can to put things right and we will put things right. Thanks for your support ❤️ 🔴 UNITED"

The post attracted significant engagement from X users, amassing over 12,000 comments. However, not all the comments are analysed in this study; instead, the analysis is limited to a corpus of 100 comments. This corpus is deliberately chosen using the purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling ensures that specific types of comments (in this case, impolite ones) are well-represented in the analysis. This approach offers valuable insights into the nature and extent of impoliteness within the given dataset. After the collection of data, the comments are classified based on the features of the five (5) impoliteness strategies proposed by Culpeper (Culpeper, 2005).

6. Results and discussions

This study employs Culpeper's (2005) Model of Impoliteness to investigate the nature and prevalence impoliteness strategies in cyberbullying comments directed at Manchester United player, Harry Maguire on X social media platform. The table and chart below present information about the frequency and percentages of these impoliteness strategies employed by X users in their cyberbullying of Maguire.

Table 1: The Frequency and Percentages of Impoliteness Strategies in the Selected Cyberbullying Comments

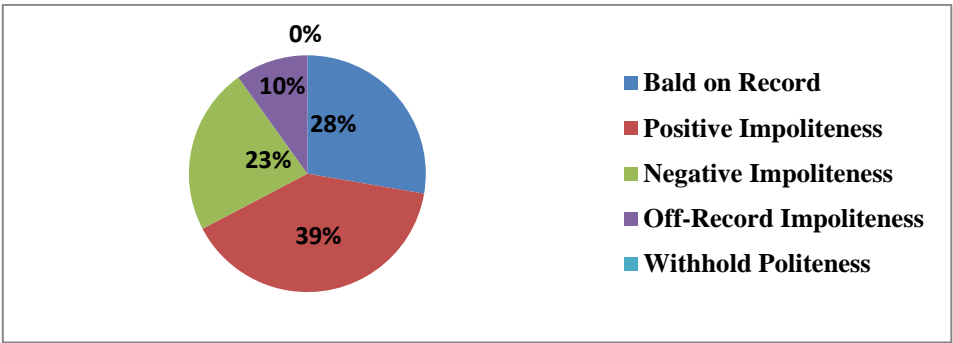| S/N	Strategies of Impoliteness	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Bald on Record Impoliteness	28	28
2.	Positive Impoliteness	39	39
3.	Negative Impoliteness	23	23
4.	Off-record Impoliteness	10	10
5.	Withhold Politeness	0	0
	Total	100	100

Chart 1: The Frequency and Percentages of Impoliteness Strategies in the Selected Cyberbullying Comments

Table 1 and Chart 1 provide an overview of the various strategies of impoliteness found in selected cyberbullying comments targeting Harry Maguire. The statistics consists of five distinct categories of impoliteness strategies. Positive Impoliteness is the most frequently employed strategy, with a frequency of 39 comments and making up 39% of the total. Bald on Record Impoliteness is the next most common category, occurring in 28 comments and representing 28%. This is followed by Negative Impoliteness, which is observed in 23 comments and constitutes 23%. Off-record Impoliteness is employed less frequently, found in 10 comments and accounting for 10% of the total. The analysis reveals that Withhold Politeness was not utilised in any of the selected comments.

Positive impoliteness
Positive impoliteness is the most predominant impoliteness strategy deployed in the selected comments. This strategy features in 39 comments, taking up 39% of the total. In the selected tweets, various impoliteness strategies, including direct commands, suggestions, criticism, and derogatory language, are observed – all aimed at undermining Harry Maguire's positive face by questioning his competence, sincerity, and role within the team. For instance:
Comment 1: @*iam_****: *STOP THIS NONSENSE, HARRY! JUST GO OUT THERE AND DO YOUR JOB.*
Comment 2: @*ony****: *Strip him of his armband. Bench him for one month.*
Comment 3: @*ten****: *Will u keep quiet?*
Comment 4: @*UTD****: *The sooner you learn that the best way to apologize for mediocrity is by performing on the pitch...*

In the comments above, the commenters employed direct command as a strategy of impoliteness to threaten the positive face of Harry Maguire. Comment 1 is straightforward and direct in its approach. It commands Harry Maguire to stop releasing public apology statements and dismisses these actions as "nonsense." This comment, in essence, questions Maguire's competence and implies that he is not adequately fulfilling his responsibilities. The use of the word "nonsense" adds a dismissive tone by suggesting that the author finds Maguire's apologies pointless and ineffective. Comment 2 goes a step further by not only demanding that Maguire be stripped of his captaincy but also suggests that he should be benched for a month. This comment is more severe and critical of Maguire, as it threatens Maguire's positive face by questioning his abilities, status as a captain, and even implying a need for disciplinary action. Stripping someone of their captaincy and benching them for an extended period indicates a lack of trust in their leadership and performance on the field. Similarly, Comment 3 commands Maguire to "keep quiet," which can be perceived as dismissive and impolite. This comment does not offer constructive criticism but instead tells Maguire to refrain from speaking altogether. It reflects a sentiment of annoyance and frustration with Maguire's public comments. Unsympathetic and offensive suggestions are also offered to pose a threat to Maguire's positive face wants. Such suggestions are observed in the following comments:
Comment 5: @*Joe****: *Go back to Leicester.*
Comment 6: @*Sha****: *Here's how you can put things right. Get yourself and Ole to leave the club!*
Comment 7: @*MUnit****: *You want to put things right for the fans? Give up your captain's armband so it can be given to a leader with fire – who isn't too busy fixing their hair. You and a few others no longer have our support. You lot don't know how embarrassing it is to lose 7-0 to our worst rivals.*
Comment 8: @*Kean****: *If u really want to put things right, let go of the Captain's armband, and put in the transfer request for January. That's the least u can do for the pain u have caused.*

By suggesting that Maguire should go back to Leicester, comment 5 implies that he does not belong at Manchester United. It questions his loyalty and status at the club. This criticism stems from a perception that Maguire is not living up to the expectations associated with a Manchester United player, especially one who holds the captain's armband. In comment 6, the author suggests that the best way to improve the situation at Manchester United is for both Harry Maguire and the then-manager, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, to leave the club. This implies doubts about their effectiveness and authority within the team. It suggests that their presence is contributing to the club's problems rather than solving them. The criticism here extends beyond Maguire to the coaching staff, questioning their ability to lead the team to success. Comment 7 suggests that Harry Maguire should give up the captain's armband (similar to comment 8) and criticises him

for seemingly prioritising his appearance ("fixing their hair") over leadership. The comment implies that Maguire's focus is more on his personal image rather than on being a strong and effective leader on the field. These comments tend to cause harm to the positive self-image that Maguire seeks to maintain as a footballer and a captain. These damaging comments undermine his efforts to present himself positively to others, particularly, Manchester United fans.

Furthermore, the selected tweets include multiple instances of criticisms, expressions of disinterest, assertions of lack of value and lack of in-group identity. These are all attempts to undermine Maguire's positive face wants. Instances of such assertions are given below:

Comment 9: *@Utd***: You are not my captain mate.*

Comment 10*: @lcfc***: We don't need you. We've got Soyuncu*

Comment 11: *@Sal***: Oh give over Harry I'm really not interested, stop your rinse repeat apologies & excuses & do your talking on the football field.*

Comment 12: *@UtdW***: An apology posted by a social media management team means absolutely NOTHING.*

Comment 13: *@mur***: Captains don't post 5-6 apologies in 2 months. They perform on the pitch. GET OUT OF MY CLUB #MaguireOut*

Comment 9 asserts that Maguire is not considered the captain by the author, which undermines his status and authority as the team captain. This tweet implies a lack of support and respect for the player. This is similar to comment 10, which implies that there is a sentiment within the fanbase that Maguire is not needed at the club. Comments 11 and 12 also express disinterest in Maguire's repeated apologies and excuses. Comment 11 suggests that Maguire should prove himself on the football field, which implies a lack of confidence in his abilities. The strong directive ("GET OUT OF MY CLUB"), in comment 13, emphasises a desire for Maguire to leave, and this indicates a significant level of dissatisfaction with his role as captain.

Comment 14: *@IP_***: Harry Maguire wo o ni ku re/To ba ku re, o ni sunn re./To ba sunn re, o ni ji re./Omo ale jati jati* (Gloss: Harry Maguire, you will not die well/if you die well, you will not sleep in peace/if you sleep in peace, you will not wake up in peace/bastard).

Comment 14 is written in Yoruba, a language primarily spoken in southwestern Nigeria and some parts of neighbouring West African countries. The comment employs a series of statements that can be interpreted as threats to Harry Maguire's positive face. It starts by suggesting that Maguire will not have a peaceful death, followed by the idea that even if he were to die well, he would not find peace in the afterlife. Furthermore, it implies that his lack of peace would continue into his sleep and even his waking life. The use of derogatory language, calling him "Omo ale jati jati" (bastard), intensifies the impoliteness and hostility of the comment. Some comments also express boredom and suggest that Maguire's apology message is uninteresting and repetitive. Instances of such comments are:

Comment 15: *@myclu***: Yawnnnn*

Comment 16: *@Sa***: Oh my days give it a rest*

Comment 17: *@Glaz***. This is getting boring...*

Comment 18: *@Tu***: These constant apologies are becoming tiresome. We don't need them.*

The comments above (comments 15-18) express disinterest and criticism towards Maguire's constant apologies. These comments reflect a growing sentiment within Manchester United fanbase that is becoming weary of Maguire's repeated apologies and believes they are unnecessary. In summary, these strategies collectively reflect positive impoliteness in response to Maguire's message addressing Manchester United's performance issues.

Bald on record impoliteness

Bald on record impoliteness is the second most used strategy in the selected comments. This strategy is the harshest and the most direct way of addressing impoliteness to the interlocutor's face. The research findings show that this strategy occurs in 28 comments, taking up 28% of the total percentage. In this case, the tweets are explicitly derogatory without attempting to soften the criticism. Some instances of tweets featuring bald on record impoliteness are:

Comment 19: *@Aaya***: Worst signing ever after bebe*

Comment 20: *@jeff***: Worst captain*

Comment 21: *@_yusp***: It shall not be well with you and the Ole*

Comment 22: *@Utd***: Absolute bollocks. Tired of reading this BS.*

Comment 23: *@Sir7***: Worst player in my team.*

Comment 19 directly calls Harry Maguire the "worst signing ever" after Bebe, who is widely regarded as one of Manchester United's worst signings in history. The use of "worst signing ever" is highly derogatory and implies that Maguire is a colossal failure for the club. Similarly, Comment 20 baldly labels Maguire as the "worst captain"; it directly attacks his leadership and ability to lead the team. The comment suggests that Maguire is not suitable for the captain's role, which is a significant critique in football. Comment 21 employs strong language to express anger and disapproval of both Harry Maguire and the team's manager, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer. Wishing ill upon them implies a desire for negative outcomes, which is a severe form of criticism. Also, the author, in comment 22, explicitly dismisses Maguire's message as "absolute bollocks" and "BS," which stands for "Bull Shit." Such language conveys strong disapproval, frustration,

and a complete lack of belief in Maguire's words. Further instances of bald on record impoliteness strategy are depicted in the comments below:

Comment 24: @*ike***: Wallahi if i catch you.. 2 by 2 go land for your head. Mugu!!* (Gloss: If I get you, 2 by 2 wooden plank will fall on your head. Fool!)

Comment 25: @*dar***: how is this roblox character the captain*

Comment 26: @*Iam***: You are nowhere near to be captain oh Man United… you are starting every match because of Ole and his favoritism… you don't have quality to be on the bench too… you are not a leader nor a fighter… you are just an 80m fridge.*

In comment 24, the author uses strong language and even threatens physical harm. The phrase "2 by 2 go land for your head" (2 by 2 wooden plank will fall on your head) is a veiled threat, which suggests that a wooden plank will be used on Maguire's head. This language indicates extreme anger and disdain towards Maguire. The use of the derogatory term "Mugu" (fool) further demonstrates the author's contempt for Maguire. The commenter, in comment 26, uses offensive and derogatory language by describing Maguire as an "80m fridge." This assertion strongly challenges Maguire's qualifications and status as captain. The term "80m fridge" is not only a personal attack on his physical appearance but also suggests that he is overvalued as a player.

In these tweets, bald on-record impoliteness is prevalent, as they directly and explicitly criticise Harry Maguire's performance, qualifications as captain, and the team's abilities. While some tweets use derogatory language, others rely on blunt and direct criticism to convey their negative evaluations. These tweets collectively reflect bald on record impoliteness in response to Maguire's message addressing Manchester United's performance issues.

Negative impoliteness

Negative impoliteness strategy is used to damage the addressee's negative face wants. In the selected comments, negative impoliteness appears in 23 comments, which represents 23% of the total. These tweets employ various negative impoliteness strategies, including criticism, commands, accusations, and expressions of doubt, to negatively evaluate Harry Maguire's actions, decisions, and leadership as the Manchester United captain. In the comments below (comments 27-30), the authors employ direct commands to undermine the negative face wants of Harry Maguire.

Comment 27: @*Ajm***: You need to stop raising your hands Harry for offside, and concentrate!*

Comment 28: @*Mn***: If you're serious about putting things right get yourself injured at training on Monday.*

Comment 29: @*Gab***: Start by benching yourself and see how good we will be.*

Comment 30: @*Tiag***: Start by stepping down as a captain then step out of the starting lineup…*

In comment 27, the author issues a direct command to Harry Maguire by instructing him to stop a specific behaviour, which is raising his hands for offside calls. This implies that Maguire is making tactical mistakes during matches. The overall tone of this comment is critical and indicates dissatisfaction with Maguire's on-field performance – this however infringes Maguire's freedom of action. Comment 28 takes a more extreme and harmful tone. It suggests that Harry Maguire should intentionally get injured, which is a concerning and unethical command. This comment not only questions Maguire's commitment to the team but also implies that his presence on the pitch is detrimental to the team's performance. Comments 29 and 30 commands Harry Maguire to relinquish his captaincy and suggests that he should not even be in the starting lineup. The comments question Maguire's ability to contribute positively to the team's performance. This suggests a lack of confidence in his skills and abilities as a player and as a captain.

Condescending accusations and criticisms are also deployed as strategies of negative impoliteness to pose a threat to Maguire's negative face. This is evident in the following comments:

Comment 31: @*Sam***: You are the leader of the team and especially so the back four... Can you please concentrate on manning your defence like VVD and Dias?*

Comment 32: @*That***: Got caught in 4K partying after losing to your rivals and then get your PR agency to post a lengthy apology essay, we see through it.*

Comment 33: @*aks***: Smalling was better than you. Both at defending and captaincy as well. So imagine your level.*

Comment 31 focuses on Maguire's on-field performance by implying that he is not meeting the expectations associated with his role as a defender. Comparing him to Virgil Van Dijk of Liverpool FC and Ruben Dias of Manchester City FC, who are widely regarded as top-class defenders, the comment highlights the gap between Maguire's performance and what is considered exceptional in his position. The commenter essentially suggests that Maguire needs to step up his game to match the level of these renowned defenders. In an attempt to belittle Maguire, comment 33 employs a comparative approach, pitting him against Chris Smalling, and suggesting that Maguire falls short when compared to Smalling. This implies that Smalling is considered a better player in the eyes of the commenter.

In the selected comments, attempts are also made to ridicule Maguire, frighten him, and invade his space. Instances of such attempts are observed in the comments below:

Comment 34: @*sds***: 4000 quote tweets lool, he's getting cooked.*

Comment 35: @*V3***: So does that explain why you were out partying last night after we got absolutely embarrassed????*

Comment 36: @*Andi***: This dude thinks he knows ball.*

Comment 37: *@Lab***: For what I learned from school, You must be responsible for your action... I would step down from team captain position with immediate effect...*

Comment 34 starts by highlighting the high number of quote tweets criticising Harry Maguire. The fact that there is a high number of such tweets indicates that Maguire is facing significant public ridicule and criticism. This observation reflects the sentiment among a substantial portion of the public, specifically Manchester United fans as regards the poor performance of the team led by Maguire. Comment 36 criticises Maguire's understanding of football. The comment suggests that he is making poor decisions and overestimating his knowledge. This criticism questions Maguire's footballing IQ and implies that his decision-making on the field is subpar. This type of criticism is particularly damaging to a player's negative face and raises doubts about his effectiveness on the pitch. Comment 37 takes a more direct approach by asserting that Harry Maguire must take responsibility for his actions and commanding him to step down from the team captain position. It implies that Maguire is not fulfilling his role effectively as a team captain. In summary, these strategies collectively reflect negative impoliteness in response to Harry Maguire's message addressing the team's poor performance. The tweets aim to challenge and criticise Maguire's role and performance within the team.

Off-record impoliteness
Off-record impoliteness is conveyed through indirect language, sarcasm, irony, and implicature. These strategies allow interlocutors to criticise or mock without directly stating their negative opinions, often maintaining a veneer of politeness. Off-record Impoliteness is employed less frequently in the selected comments. It appears in 10 comments (10%). The following comments depict the use of off-record impoliteness:
Comment 38: *@Saz***: Don't listen to the criticism, in my eyes you're still the best defender in the world.*
Comment 39: *@mich***: My captain. Few more performances like that and we'll finally have a proper manager. Keep it up.*
Comment 40: *@sta***: Maybe they were right about you after all…*
Comment 41: *@ted***: Thanks Harry's (social media team). Question for the defence, Ball gets played into the box, do you:*
    A) lamp it in your own net?
    B) lamp it at your keeper?
    C) watch it onto the foot of the oppo player?
    D) clear it like a normal football player?
    Thanks.
Comment 42: *@Jos***: Cheers Harry, it's really comforting receiving these social media posts on the weekly fella. All the best. Jos***.*
Comment 43: *@Kli***: Argh our weekly essay is finally out.*

While comment 38 appears to be a compliment, stating Maguire is "still the best defender in the world", it takes a turn by mocking Maguire and subtly acknowledging the existence of criticism. This combination of praise and mockery serves to undermine Maguire's reputation and slyly criticise his performance without directly stating it. Comment 39 also appears to be supportive on the surface as the author addresses Maguire as "My captain." However, beneath the surface, off-record impoliteness is present. The implied criticism of Maguire's recent performances suggests that they have been subpar. By addressing him as "My captain," the author attempts to maintain a veneer of support while subtly hinting at his disappointment with Maguire's recent contributions to the team. The author of comment 41 employs sarcasm and off-record impoliteness by thanking Maguire's social media team. However, the mention of *"Harry's (social media team)"* indicates that the gratitude is insincere. It implies that the social media team is responsible for the content, not Harry Maguire himself. The author further employs a series of rhetorical questions and indirect language to criticise the defensive capabilities of the team. The comment indirectly suggests that their performance has been subpar. It effectively conveys off-record impoliteness by mocking the team's defensive skills while maintaining a veneer of politeness. Even as comment 42 seems polite, the use of "comforting" and the tone suggest sarcasm. It indicates that the social media posts are not genuinely appreciated. Instead of expressing genuine comfort or appreciation, it implies that the posts are anything but comforting, possibly even irritating or bothersome. Comment 43 mocks the length and content of Maguire's social media posts by referring to them as "weekly essay". This comment suggests that Maguire's "weekly" posts are excessively long and tedious. The tone of this comment is mocking and somewhat dismissive. In all these tweets, off-record impoliteness is conveyed through indirect language, sarcasm, irony, and implicature. These discursive devices allow X users to criticise and mock Harry Maguire without directly stating their negative opinions, while maintaining a facade of politeness.

7. Conclusion
This study has delved into the linguistic impoliteness strategies employed in cyberbullying comments directed at Manchester United player, Harry Maguire, on the online social networking platform X (formerly Twitter). The research findings, guided by Culpeper's (2005) Model of Impoliteness, shed light on the multifaceted nature of impoliteness in online interactions. The analysis of 100 purposively selected comments reveals the nature of impoliteness strategies in the selected comments directed at Harry Maguire. The categories of these strategies include positive impoliteness, bald

on record impoliteness, negative impoliteness and off-record impoliteness. This suggests that that impoliteness in comments directed at Maguire on X platform is not a one-dimensional phenomenon but rather multifaceted. The four categories of impoliteness in the commentary highlight that individuals may employ various linguistic strategies to convey impoliteness towards a person or a group of persons.

Positive Impoliteness emerged as the most predominant strategy, comprising 39% of the total comments. This strategy highlights that a significant portion of the commenters aim to undermine Harry Maguire's positive face by utilising discursive devices such as issuing direct commands, making offensive suggestions, offering criticism, and employing derogatory language. These actions collectively challenge Maguire's competence and overall impact on Manchester United while diminishing his desire to feel valued, respected, and appreciated within the club.

Bald on Record Impoliteness was the second most prevalent category, taking up 28% of the comments. This strategy indicates that certain commenters express direct and explicit criticism of Harry Maguire's performance, his qualifications as captain, and the team's abilities without employing any mitigating language. Within this category, some tweets employ derogatory language, while others rely on straightforward and unequivocal critique to convey their negative assessments. Negative Impoliteness, which was present in approximately 23% of the comments, underscores the intent of certain X users to damage Harry Maguire's wants to have autonomy or freedom of action by employing a range of discursive devices that suggest negative impoliteness. These devices encompass open rebuke, frightening, accusations, belittling, and expressions of doubt – all directed at evaluating Maguire's actions, decisions, and leadership as the captain of Manchester United. These commenters emphasise Maguire's accountability for the team's subpar performance.

The analysis further reveals that Off-record Impoliteness was present in 10 comments, comprising 10% of the total. This strategy is characterised by the use of certain discursive devices such as indirect language, sarcasm, irony, and implicature, which enables some X users to subtly convey their disappointment, criticism, and mockery of Harry Maguire without explicitly stating their negative opinions. Importantly, this approach allows commenters to maintain a veneer of politeness while delivering their impolite remarks. Notably, the absence of Withhold Politeness in the analysed comments can be attributed to the context of Harry Maguire's post, which was an apology. In this context, the commenters have not felt the need to express gratitude or politeness, as the post itself was meant to acknowledge the team's subpar performance. Paradoxically, instead of addressing the fans' concerns, Maguire's post received backlash and negative reactions. Moreover, it is worth noting that cyberbullying comments often directly target the addressee's face without employing any mitigating or polite language.

The findings of this study, which centers on examining cyberbullying comments directed at a prominent footballer on X platform and reveals positive impoliteness as the predominant impoliteness strategy, contrast with Indrawan's (2008) research, which indicated that the most prevalent impoliteness strategy in cyberbullying on Instagram is the negative impoliteness strategy. This contrast underscores the variability of cyberbullying strategies across different social media platforms. It suggests that cyberbullying behaviours are not universally uniform but can vary based on the platform's features, the individuals being targeted, user dynamics, or cultural factors. This insight is valuable for policymakers, educators, and social media platforms as they work to address and prevent cyberbullying and create safer online environments. The study concludes that within the digital sports community on X platform, fans frequently employ strategies of positive impoliteness and bald-on-record impoliteness as means to challenge the face wants of players, such as Harry Maguire, particularly when their performances are below expectation. Further research in this area may explore the impact of such impoliteness strategies on the mental and emotional well-being of public figures and their ability to engage with their online fan base constructively.

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