



Dehumanization and Identity Reclamation in 86 (Eighty-Six): A Thematic Analysis

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Abstract. *Language in 86 (Eighty-Six) is used not only as a means of communication, but also as a tool to determine who is recognized as human and who is excluded from humanity. This study examines the representation of dehumanization and identity reclamation in Volume 1 of the light novel using a descriptive qualitative method and thematic analysis. The data consisted of 52 items taken from selected dialogues and narrations that describe the experiences of the Eighty-Six and their relationship with the Republic of San Magnolia. The data were classified into three main themes: institutional erasure of humanity, normalization and concealment of violence, and identity reclamation and resistance. Among these themes, identity reclamation and resistance was the most dominant, with 20 data items. This theme frequently appears through the efforts of the Spearhead Squadron members to maintain their names, personal memories, solidarity, dignity, and shared identity despite continuous discrimination. The findings also show that institutional language, labels, and military terms are used to reduce the Eighty-Six into objects, tools, and nonhuman beings. However, the characters gradually challenge these labels by reclaiming their identity and asserting their right to live as human beings. Therefore, language in the novel functions both as a tool of oppression and as a means of resistance, recognition, and identity reconstruction.*

Keywords: *Dehumanization; Group Identity; Language And Power; Light Novel; Thematic Analysis.*

Abstrak. Bahasa dalam 86 (Eighty-Six) tidak hanya digunakan sebagai alat komunikasi, tetapi juga sebagai sarana untuk menentukan siapa yang diakui sebagai manusia dan siapa yang dikeluarkan dari kategori kemanusiaan. Penelitian ini mengkaji representasi dehumanisasi dan reklamasi identitas dalam Volume 1 light novel tersebut dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dan analisis tematik. Data penelitian terdiri atas 52 data yang diambil dari dialog dan narasi terpilih yang menggambarkan pengalaman kelompok Eighty-Six serta hubungan mereka dengan Republik San Magnolia. Data tersebut dikelompokkan ke dalam tiga tema utama, yaitu penghapusan kemanusiaan secara institusional, normalisasi dan penyembunyian kekerasan, serta reklamasi identitas dan perlawanan. Dari ketiga tema tersebut, reklamasi identitas dan perlawanan menjadi tema yang paling dominan dengan jumlah 20 data. Tema ini banyak ditampilkan melalui usaha anggota Spearhead Squadron dalam mempertahankan nama, ingatan pribadi, solidaritas, martabat, dan identitas bersama mereka di tengah diskriminasi yang terus berlangsung. Temuan penelitian juga menunjukkan bahwa bahasa institusional, pelabelan, dan istilah militer digunakan untuk merendahkan Eighty-Six menjadi objek, alat, dan makhluk yang tidak dianggap manusia. Namun, para tokoh secara bertahap menentang pelabelan tersebut dengan merebut kembali identitas mereka dan menegaskan hak untuk hidup sebagai manusia. Dengan demikian, bahasa dalam novel ini berfungsi sebagai alat penindasan sekaligus sarana perlawanan, pengakuan, dan pembentukan kembali identitas.

Kata Kunci: Analisis Tematik; Bahasa Dan Kekuasaan; Dehumanisasi; Identitas Kelompok; Novel Ringan.

1. INTRODUCTION

Discrimination is maintained not only through laws, institutions, and physical violence, but also through language. Labels, official terms, and repeated descriptions can separate people into superior and inferior groups. When this kind of language is repeatedly used, unequal treatment and violence may begin to appear normal or acceptable (Andiani et al., 2023). Literary works often reflect these social realities by showing how power and inequality are represented through language. Falah (2017) also shows that literary works can represent social conflict and the relationship between dominant and marginalized groups. These issues are

clearly represented in Volume 1 of 86 (Eighty-Six), a light novel series written by Asato Asato and later adapted into an anime. The story takes place during a war between the Republic of San Magnolia and the Giadian Empire (Asato, 2019). The Republic presents itself as a democratic nation that values equality. However, this equality applies mainly to the Alba, who have silver hair and silver eyes. The Colorata, who have different physical features, lose their civil rights, are forced to live outside the eighty-five recognized Sectors, and are excluded from society (Jamilah & Haryanti, 2025).

The treatment of the Colorata reflects institutional racism because discrimination is built into the Republic's laws, policies, and military system. Institutional racism does not depend only on personal prejudice. It can also operate through social rules and practices that place one racial group above another (Indriani & Wahyuni, 2021). In Volume 1 of 86 (Eighty-Six), the Colorata are oppressed by a political system that removes their legal identity, separates them from society, and forces them to fight in the war.

Language plays an important role in maintaining this system. Language can represent ideology and symbolic power, while word choices can influence how particular groups are positioned and understood in society (Suharyo et al., 2015). The Colorata are called "Eighty-Six," described as "pigs in human form," and classified as "Processors" who operate supposedly "unmanned drones" (Asato, 2019). These expressions do more than insult them. They reduce individuals to animals, administrative categories, and military functions. Animal-based labels can place marginalized groups in an inferior position by representing them as less than human and making discriminatory treatment easier to justify (Ayuningtyas & Merdeka, 2021). The official news also claims that "no loss of life was reported" after battles in which Eighty-Six soldiers are killed. By excluding them from the category of human beings, the Republic can hide their deaths and present its military system as humane. Volume 1 directly explains that a Juggernaut operated by an Eighty-Six can still be classified as an unmanned drone because the pilot is not officially considered human.

These representations show animalistic and mechanistic forms of dehumanization. Animalistic dehumanization occurs when people are compared to animals and presented as inferior or less human. This is reflected in the phrase "pigs in human form" (Haslam, 2006). Mechanistic dehumanization occurs when people are treated as objects, machines, numbers, or functional parts. This can be seen in the classification of Eighty-Six soldiers as "Processors" and in the presentation of the Juggernauts as unmanned drones. Dehumanizing language also helps the Republic avoid responsibility for the harm it causes. Bandura (1999) explains that moral disengagement allows harmful actions to be justified or concealed. In the story, the

phrase “no loss of life was reported” changes the deaths of Eighty-Six soldiers into damage to military equipment. At the same time, the Republic describes its combat system as humane and advanced. This positive description allows the state to maintain a moral image while continuing to exploit the Colorata.

However, Volume 1 also shows the beginning of resistance against this imposed identity. A key moment occurs when Theo confronts Lena by saying, “not once have you ever even asked us our names” (Asato, 2019, p. 117). Although Lena does not openly call them Eighty-Six, her failure to ask their names shows that she has not fully recognized them as individuals. The confrontation challenges the system that treats the Squadron members mainly through call signs and military roles.

The meaning of “Eighty-Six” also begins to change as the Spearhead Squadron connects the label with its shared experience, survival, pride, and solidarity. This reflects linguistic reclamation, in which members of a marginalized group adopt a negative label and give it a new meaning (Brontsema, 2004; Ritchie, 2017). The label does not lose its history of discrimination, but it is no longer defined only by the Republic. It also becomes part of how the Squadron understands its own collective identity.

Previous research has discussed institutional racism in 86 (Eighty-Six), including segregation, loss of citizenship, identity erasure, and systematic discrimination (Jamilah & Haryanti, 2025). Other studies have examined how soldiers in fictional war narratives are treated as tools of military and political systems (Wiardani & Kartika, 2026). These studies help explain how marginalized soldiers are treated as less than human. However, they give less attention to how dehumanizing representations are connected to the later recognition and reclamation of group identity.

Therefore, this study examines recurring representations of dehumanization and identity reclamation in Volume 1 of 86 (Eighty-Six). It focuses on dialogue and narration that show how the Colorata’s humanity is erased, how violence against them is normalized and concealed, and how the Spearhead Squadron begins to resist the identity imposed by the Republic.

2. THEORETICAL REVIEW

Thematic Analysis

Bagian ini menguraikan teori-teori relevan yang mendasari topik penelitian dan memberikan ulasan tentang beberapa penelitian sebelumnya yang relevan dan memberikan acuan serta landasan bagi penelitian ini dilakukan. Jika ada hipotesis, bisa dinyatakan tidak

tersurat dan tidak harus dalam kalimat tanya. Thematic analysis is a qualitative method used to identify and organize repeated patterns of meaning within a set of data (Heriyanto, 2018). This method also helps researchers interpret qualitative data by grouping similar information into meaningful themes (Sitasari, 2022). Braun and Clarke (2006) describe six stages of thematic analysis: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. In this study, thematic analysis is used to organize dialogue and narration from Volume 1 of *86 (Eighty-Six)* into broader themes related to dehumanization and identity reclamation.

Dehumanization

Dehumanization occurs when individuals or groups are represented as less than fully human. It reduces their dignity, individuality, and moral value. When people are no longer viewed as equal human beings, discrimination and violence against them may become easier to accept. Haslam (2006) divides dehumanization into two main forms: animalistic and mechanistic dehumanization. Animalistic dehumanization occurs when people are compared to animals or described as uncivilized, irrational, and lacking human refinement. It denies them qualities that are commonly seen as uniquely human, such as morality, self-control, and rational thought.

Mechanistic dehumanization occurs when people are treated as objects, machines, numbers, or tools. Their value is based only on their function, while their emotions, experiences, and personal identities are ignored. These two forms of dehumanization are used in this study to examine how the Colorata are represented in *86 (Eighty-Six)*.

Moral Disengagement

Moral disengagement refers to the ways individuals or institutions justify harmful actions without feeling fully responsible for them. Bandura (1999) explains that harmful behavior can be made acceptable through several strategies, including moral justification, euphemistic labeling, advantageous comparison, and distortion of consequences. Moral justification presents harmful actions as necessary to achieve a greater purpose. Euphemistic labeling uses softer or less direct expressions to hide the seriousness of violence. Advantageous comparison makes harmful behavior appear less severe by comparing it with something considered worse. Distortion of consequences reduces, ignores, or hides the suffering caused by an action. In *86*, these strategies help explain how the Republic presents its treatment of the Colorata as reasonable and necessary. Terms such as “unmanned machines” and “a war without human casualties” hide the fact that human soldiers are being sent to die.

Moral disengagement therefore supports the dehumanizing system by making violence appear acceptable.

Linguistic Reclamation

Linguistic reclamation occurs when members of a marginalized group take a negative or stigmatizing label and give it a new meaning. Instead of allowing the dominant group to control the meaning of the label, the targeted group uses it as part of its own identity.

Brontsema (2004) identifies three possible forms of linguistic reclamation: value reversal, neutralization, and stigma exploitation. Value reversal changes a negative label into a positive source of identity. Neutralization reduces the insulting meaning of the label. Stigma exploitation keeps the negative history of the term visible to remember or expose past discrimination. These forms show that reclamation does not always remove the painful history of a label. In some cases, the label gains power because the group uses it to express both its past suffering and its present identity.

Self-Labeling and Group Identity

Self-labeling occurs when members of a group deliberately use a label that was previously imposed on them. Galinsky et al. (2013) explain that reclaiming a stigmatizing label can increase a group's sense of power. At the same time, a stronger sense of group identity can encourage members to use the label more openly.

Self-labeling can strengthen solidarity when a shared term becomes part of a group's collective identity (Pertiwi & Shabbir, 2026). Labels used by members to identify themselves can also connect them through shared origins, experiences, and social positions (Maglana, 2016). The meaning of a label is therefore shaped not only by the dominant group that first imposed it, but also by the people who later claim it. In *86 (Eighty-Six)*, the Spearhead Squadron's use of the name "Eighty-Six" shows a change from an identity imposed by the state to an identity claimed by the group itself. The label no longer represents only exclusion and discrimination. It also becomes associated with shared experience, survival, pride, and resistance.

Theoretical Framework

These theories are used to guide the thematic analysis in this study. Haslam's (2006) theory helps identify animalistic and mechanistic forms of dehumanization. Bandura's (1999) concept of moral disengagement helps explain how violence against the Colorata is hidden, softened, and justified. Brontsema (2004) and Galinsky et al. (2013) help explain how the label "Eighty-Six" later developed into a collective identity.

Together, these concepts provide a framework for understanding the three main themes identified in the study: institutional erasure of humanity, normalization and concealment of violence, and identity reclamation and resistance.

3. METHOD

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach and thematic analysis to explore recurring patterns of dehumanization and identity reclamation in Volume 1 of 86 (Eighty-Six). Descriptive qualitative research is suitable for describing a phenomenon systematically and in detail using non-numerical data (Furidha, 2023). A qualitative approach was also appropriate because it allows researchers to interpret linguistic meaning within its narrative and social context (Novarita et al., 2025).

The primary data consisted of dialogue and narration from the official English translation of 86 (Eighty-Six), Volume 1, published by Yen Press in 2019. Volume 1 was selected because it introduces the Republic of San Magnolia's discriminatory system and presents major examples of dehumanizing language directed at the Colorata. It also shows the early development of identity recognition and reclamation among the Spearhead Squadron.

The data focused on expressions related to the treatment and identity of the Colorata, such as "86", "pig", "Handler", "Processor", "unmanned drone," "Colorata", and "Name-Bearer". Dialogues and narrative passages were included when they represented the denial of humanity, the concealment or justification of violence, or the effort of the Eighty-Six to maintain and redefine their identity.

The data were collected through close and repeated reading of Volume 1. Relevant dialogue and narrative passages were recorded together with their speaker or narrative voice, context, page number, and connection to the focus of the study. Only extracts that directly represented dehumanization, identity recognition, reclamation, or resistance were selected. Repeated expressions with the same meaning were recorded as separate data only when they appeared in a different context or performed a different function in the narrative.

The data were analyzed using the six stages of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, the researchers became familiar with the data through repeated reading of the novel. Second, the selected extracts were given initial codes. These codes included animalistic dehumanization, mechanistic dehumanization, administrative labeling, euphemistic labeling, moral justification, distortion of consequences, identity recognition, self-labeling, value reversal, and resistance.

Third, related codes were grouped into broader themes. Fourth, the themes were reviewed by comparing them with the selected extracts and the overall narrative context. Fifth, each theme was defined and named according to its central pattern of meaning. Finally, the themes were presented through representative quotations interpreted using the theoretical framework of the study.

The coding process was guided by Haslam's (2006) concepts of animalistic and mechanistic dehumanization, Bandura's (1999) concept of moral disengagement, Brontsema's (2004) concept of linguistic reclamation, and Galinsky et al.'s (2013) concept of self-labeling. Based on the coding and thematic analysis, the data were organized into three main themes: institutional erasure of humanity, normalization and concealment of violence, and identity reclamation and resistance.

This study was limited to the official English translation of Volume 1. Therefore, it did not examine possible differences between the English translation and the original Japanese text. The findings are also limited to the representation of dehumanization and identity reclamation in the first volume and do not cover the full development of these issues throughout the series.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Identity reclamation and resistance was the most frequently represented theme, with 20 excerpts. It was followed by normalization and concealment of violence with 17 excerpts and institutional erasure of humanity with 15 excerpts. These numbers show how frequently each theme appeared in the selected data, but they do not determine the importance of each theme. Table 1 presents a representative example from each category.

Table 1. Themes Identified in *86 (Eighty-Six)* Volume 1.

Main Theme	Representative Dialogue	Context	Quantity
Institutional Erasure of Humanity	"Your polite greetings to us subhuman Eighty-Six are much appreciated, Alba" (Asato, 2019, p. 24).	Pleiades sarcastically responds to Lena's greeting and identifies the unequal status between the Alba Handler and the Eighty-Six Processor.	15
Normalization and Concealment of Violence	"What is the government thinking, letting those animals set foot on Republic soil?" (Asato, 2019, p. 31).	Lena's mother describes the Colorata as animals while rejecting their right to return to the Republic.	17
Identity Reclamation and Resistance	".....not once have you ever even asked us our names!" (Asato, 2019, p. 117)	Theo confronts Lena and reveals that her sympathy has not included recognition of the Squadron members as individuals.	20
Total			52

Institutional Erasure of Humanity

The first theme shows how the Republic of San Magnolia removes the humanity of the Colorata through its administrative and military systems. The process begins when the government takes away their civil rights and forces them to live outside the eighty-five recognized Sectors. District 86 then becomes more than the name of a location. “Eighty-Six” becomes a general label for the Colorata, replacing their different names, backgrounds, and identities with one administrative category.

This unequal status is reflected in Pleiades’s sarcastic response to Lena: “Your polite greetings to us subhuman Eighty-Six are much appreciated, Alba” (Asato, 2019, p. 24). The words “subhuman Eighty-Six” show that the label does not simply indicate where the Colorata live. It also represents the inferior status imposed on them by the Republic. Although the Colorata were born as citizens, they are officially treated as people who do not deserve the same rights and recognition as the Alba.

The label also reflects mechanistic dehumanization. Haslam (2006) explains that mechanistic dehumanization occurs when people are treated as objects, machines, numbers, or functional parts. In Volume 1, the Eighty-Six who operate the Juggernauts are officially called “Processors” or “information-processing units.” They are therefore classified according to their military function rather than recognized as human soldiers. The narrative further describes them as “mechanical parts” whose deaths are not officially counted as human deaths (Asato, 2019, p. 27).

The term “Handler” supports this unequal military relationship. The Alba officers remain safely inside the Republic and remotely command the Processors through the Para-RAID system. The word does not directly describe the Eighty-Six as machines, but it places them in a relationship in which one side controls and the other side is handled. This arrangement presents the Handler and the Processor not as equal soldiers, but as a controller and a military unit.

The removal of personal identity also appears in the Republic’s records. During the development of the Para-RAID system, Eighty-Six children were used as human test subjects because they were not officially considered human. The narrative explains that they were given numbers and that their names were not recorded (Asato, 2019, p. 216). This does not mean that every Eighty-Six completely loses their personal name in daily life. However, it shows that the Republic’s administrative system can remove their names whenever their identity is considered unimportant.

This erasure continues after death. Fallen Eighty-Six are not allowed to be collected or buried because the Republic officially claims that there are no human casualties on the battlefield. The novel states that they have no official graves, while the records of dead Processors are destroyed. Karlstahl explains that this policy allows the Republic to make it appear as though the Eighty-Six never existed (Asato, 2019, p. 221). Their deaths are therefore erased not only from public attention but also from official history.

Together, these findings show that institutional erasure operates at several levels. The Colorata lose their civil rights, are grouped under the label “Eighty-Six,” are classified as military functions, and may be recorded through numbers instead of names. After their deaths, their bodies, graves, and records are also removed. The erasure of their humanity is therefore not limited to individual prejudice. It is built into the Republic’s legal, administrative, and military systems.

Normalization and Concealment of Violence

The second theme shows how the Republic of San Magnolia uses language to make violence against the Colorata appear normal, acceptable, or invisible. Instead of openly admitting that human soldiers are being sent to die, the Republic describes the war through animalistic labels, technical military terms, and positive claims about its own actions. These representations allow the government and the Alba population to avoid recognizing the suffering of the Eighty-Six.

This concealment can be seen in an official news broadcast stating that “no loss of life was reported on our side” (Asato, 2019, p. 17). The statement is made after a battle in which Eighty-Six soldiers operate the Republic’s Juggernauts. Although some of them are killed, the broadcast reports only light damage to equipment. Their deaths are therefore removed from the official account of the battle because they are not recognized as human losses.

The broadcast also describes the Juggernauts as “unmanned drones” and presents them as the pride of the Republic. This description hides the fact that the machines are operated by Eighty-Six soldiers. The Republic can claim that no human lives are sent to the front lines only because it excludes the Eighty-Six from the category of human beings. Lena recognizes this contradiction when she observes that the absence of officially recognized casualties does not mean that no one has died (Asato, 2019, pp. 17–19). This use of language reflects euphemistic labeling and distortion of consequences. Bandura (1999) explains that euphemistic labeling replaces harmful actions with softer or more technical expressions, while distortion of consequences reduces or hides the suffering caused by those actions. In Volume 1, deaths are described as equipment damage, human soldiers are classified as Processors, and the vehicles

they operate are called unmanned drones. These terms make the violence sound like a technical military matter rather than the loss of human lives. The narrative later explains why this classification is possible. Since the Eighty-Six are not considered human, a Juggernaut operated by one of them can still be officially categorized as an unmanned drone (Asato, 2019, p. 26). The Eighty-Six are also designated as “information-processing units” and described as “mechanical parts” whose deaths are not counted as deaths (Asato, 2019, p. 27). These terms show mechanistic dehumanization because the soldiers are represented according to their military function rather than their humanity.

Animalistic dehumanization supports the same system. The expression “pigs in human form” presents the Colorata as beings who only appear human but do not deserve human rights (Asato, 2019, p. 11). According to Haslam (2006), animalistic dehumanization occurs when people are represented as uncivilized, inferior, or lacking qualities considered uniquely human. By describing the Colorata as pigs, the Republic places them outside the moral group to which rights and protection are normally given.

The animal comparison is also repeated in everyday speech. Lena’s mother refers to the Colorata as “animals” and “livestock” that should be confined and controlled (Asato, 2019, pp. 31–33). Her words show that dehumanizing ideas are not limited to official government documents. They have become part of the way ordinary Alba citizens understand the Colorata. Violence against the Eighty-Six becomes easier to accept because they are viewed as animals rather than as fellow citizens.

The Republic also protects its public image by describing its military system as “humane and advanced” and presenting its actions as righteous (Asato, 2019, p. 18). The broadcast contrasts the supposedly moral Republic with the “fallen Empire” and its evil weapons. This contrast allows the Republic to present itself as the morally superior side while hiding the discrimination and forced military service taking place within its own borders. This positive representation reflects moral justification and advantageous comparison. Moral justification presents harmful actions as necessary or morally correct, while advantageous comparison makes those actions seem less serious by comparing them with the actions of a worse enemy (Bandura, 1999). By portraying the Empire as evil and itself as humane, the Republic avoids examining the violence it commits against the Colorata. The repeated nature of the broadcasts is also important. The same claims about unmanned drones, light equipment damage, and zero casualties are presented to the public again and again. Most civilians accept these reports because the battlefield is far from the eighty-five Sectors and the suffering of the Eighty-Six remains outside their daily experience. Repetition gradually turns the government’s

false representation into an accepted social reality. Together, these findings show that violence against the Colorata is concealed through several connected forms of language. Animalistic labels make them appear undeserving of human rights, while technical military terms remove their lives and deaths from official recognition. At the same time, positive descriptions of the Republic allow the state and its citizens to view their actions as humane. Violence is therefore normalized not because it is completely hidden, but because the victims are linguistically represented as animals, machines, and military equipment rather than as human beings.

Identity Reclamation and Resistance

The third theme shows how the Spearhead Squadron resists the identity imposed on its members by the Republic. This resistance begins with a demand for personal recognition. Theo confronts Lena by saying, “.....not once have you ever even asked us our names!” (Asato, 2019, p. 117). His statement reveals that avoiding the insulting label “Eighty-Six” is not enough to recognize the Squadron members as human beings.

Before this confrontation, Lena believes that she treats the Squadron better than other Handlers because she speaks politely to them and cares about their safety. However, she communicates with them mainly through their call signs and military roles. Theo’s statement exposes the distance between showing sympathy and recognizing someone as an individual. By demanding that Lena acknowledge their names, he challenges a system that represents the Processors as anonymous military units.

The importance of this confrontation becomes clearer when Lena later asks each Squadron member to introduce themselves. Although Shin has already told her their names, Lena still wants to hear them directly from the members themselves. This action changes the relationship between them. They are no longer known only as Processors, call signs, or units under her command. They begin to be recognized as individuals with personal names and experiences. The recognition of personal names is an important form of resistance because the Republic’s system removes individuality from the Colorata. Asking for and remembering their names restores part of the identity that has been hidden by administrative labels and military classifications. The act does not end their oppression, but it challenges the idea that they can be treated as interchangeable military equipment. The theme later develops from personal recognition into collective identity reclamation. The Squadron members no longer consider themselves citizens of the Republic that rejected and exploited them. Instead, the narrative identifies them as “the Eighty-Six,” people whose lives and identities have been shaped by the battlefield (Asato, 2019, p. 205). The label remains connected to their exclusion, but it is no longer controlled only by the Republic.

This change reflects linguistic reclamation. Brontsema (2004) explains that reclamation occurs when a marginalized group adopts a label previously used against it and gives that label a different meaning. For the Republic, “Eighty-Six” refers to people who have been removed from citizenship and treated as disposable combat units. For the Spearhead Squadron, however, the name becomes connected to shared experience, endurance, and the determination to continue living.

The process can also be understood as value reversal. The negative history of the label is not erased, but its meaning is changed. The novel describes the Eighty-Six as a people of war whose pride comes from fighting and living fully for as long as they can (Asato, 2019, p. 208). In this context, “Eighty-Six” no longer represents only shame or exclusion. It also expresses the group’s strength, solidarity, and ability to define itself.

Raiden’s statement further shows this resistance. He explains that the Squadron members choose to fight and survive for as long as possible rather than give up or behave like the people who oppressed them. Their resistance is therefore not based only on revenge. It is also based on their decision to preserve their principles and choose how they will live, even when the Republic has already decided that they should die.

This form of self-identification is related to the relationship between self-labeling and group power described by Galinsky et al. (2013). By identifying themselves as the Eighty-Six, the Squadron members gain greater control over how the label is understood. They are no longer only passive recipients of a category created by the state. They actively connect the name to their own values and shared history.

However, the label does not become completely neutral. It continues to carry the history of segregation, forced military service, and death. Its reclaimed meaning comes partly from this history. By continuing to call themselves the Eighty-Six, the Squadron members remember what has been done to them while refusing to let the Republic fully determine who they are. Overall, the dialogue “....not once have you ever even asked us our names!” marks the beginning of resistance through personal recognition. This resistance later develops into collective reclamation when the Squadron accepts “Eighty-Six” as its own identity. The theme therefore shows two connected processes: the restoration of individual identity through names and the reconstruction of collective identity through the reclaimed label “Eighty-Six”.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study finds that dehumanization and identity reclamation in Volume 1 of 86 (Eighty-Six) are represented through three main themes: institutional erasure of humanity, normalization and concealment of violence, and identity reclamation and resistance. Institutional erasure appears through the removal of the Colorata's civil rights, the use of the label "Eighty-Six," and military terms such as "Handler" and "Processor." These labels reduce the Colorata to administrative categories and military functions rather than recognizing them as individuals and citizens. Their humanity is further erased when their names, deaths, and personal records are ignored by the Republic.

The normalization and concealment of violence appear through animalistic expressions such as "pigs in human form" and technical terms such as "unmanned drones." The official claim that "no loss of life was reported" hides the deaths of the Eighty-Six because they are not counted as human soldiers. At the same time, the Republic describes its military system as "humane and advanced." These expressions allow the government to hide the consequences of the war and present its treatment of the Colorata as normal and acceptable.

The findings also show how the Eighty-Six begin to resist the identity imposed on them. Theo's statement that Lena had never asked their names challenges their treatment as anonymous military units and demands recognition of their individual identities. Later, the Spearhead Squadron begins to use "Eighty-Six" as its own collective identity. The label is no longer connected only to exclusion and discrimination, but also to shared experience, survival, pride, solidarity, and resistance. This shows that the meaning of a stigmatizing label can change when the targeted group begins to define it for itself.

Overall, language in Volume 1 of 86 (Eighty-Six) has two opposing functions. The Republic uses language to remove the humanity of the Colorata, conceal violence, and support discrimination. In contrast, the Spearhead Squadron uses names and self-identification to demand recognition, reclaim its collective identity, and affirm its humanity.

Future studies may examine later volumes of the light novel to trace how the identity of the Eighty-Six develops further. Researchers may also compare the official English translation with the original Japanese text to identify possible changes in meaning. A comparison between the light novel and its anime adaptation may also show how dehumanization and identity reclamation are represented differently through textual and audiovisual forms.

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