

## **\*\* Anti-racism in football organizations \*\***

**Article.** Talesh, S.A. & Spencer, L.L. (2024). A mile wide but an inch deep: Pervasive racism in international football, symbolic compliance, and a substantive path forward. University of Pennsylvania Journal of Law and Social Change, 27, 131-172

**Link.** ["A Mile Wide but an Inch Deep: Pervasive Racism in International Football" by Shauhin A. Talesh and Spencer L. Levitt](#)

**Aim.** Despite decades of efforts to combat it, racism remains a persistent and deeply rooted problem in international football. This research, drawing on multiple studies, reveals that the issue isn't a lack of rules or stated commitments, but rather a systemic failure to translate those commitments into meaningful action. Football organizations, from FIFA down to national leagues, often prioritize appearing to address racism over actually solving it.

**Key findings.** The researchers have analyzed the structures and policies of football organizations, finding a lack of coordination and a tendency to focus on symbolic gestures – like anti-racism campaigns – rather than substantial reforms. FIFA, while presenting itself as a leader in the fight against discrimination, often lacks the authority or willingness to impose meaningful penalties, and sometimes even hinders progress. Policies are frequently vaguely worded, allowing organizations to avoid accountability and shift responsibility. This leads to a cycle where rules are adopted that look good but don't effectively curb racist behavior, which manifests in various forms, from overt abuse from fans to subtle biases in player recruitment and team selection.

This research is important because it highlights a broader issue: organizations across many sectors often fail to address racism effectively despite stated commitments to equality. Football, with its global reach and cultural influence, serves as a crucial case study for understanding these organizational failures. The findings suggest that simply passing laws or creating policies isn't enough; strong enforcement, clear leadership, and a willingness to address systemic issues are essential.

**Limitations.** Much of the research used for the paper focuses on European football, particularly England, and may not fully represent the situation in other regions. Additionally, while the studies acknowledge the broader societal factors that contribute to racism, they primarily focus on the organizational level.