

****Understanding Racism in European Football: A Look at Leaders' Views****

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Aim. This research aims to understand how people in charge of football organizations across Europe view racism in the sport. The researchers wanted to know if leaders see racism as isolated incidents caused by a few bad actors, or as a deeper problem built into the system of football itself.

Method. Researchers spoke in-depth with twelve leaders from eight different European countries who work within football organizations. These conversations explored their experiences and opinions on racism, and the researchers analyzed the language used to identify common themes.

Key findings. The study revealed a complicated situation. While most leaders agreed that racism is a problem in football, there was disagreement about 'where' the problem originates. Some focused on racist behavior from fans, seeing it as a matter of 'passion' or ignorance, and emphasized punishing individual offenders. Others acknowledged that racism is woven into the culture of football, but even those leaders often struggled to articulate how to address it. A recurring theme was a tendency to treat racism as something happening outside of the organizations themselves, rather than looking at potential biases within them. A significant barrier to progress appears to be a lack of diversity in leadership positions – football is still largely run by older, White men. Leaders often framed diversity as a 'good for business' strategy, rather than a matter of fairness and inclusion. The study also found that many leaders were uncomfortable discussing race and racism, suggesting a need for better tools and frameworks to guide these conversations.

Understanding how leaders perceive racism is crucial for making real change. If they see it as simply a few 'bad apples', they're less likely to address the deeper, systemic issues that allow racism to persist. This research highlights the need for a more comprehensive approach that tackles the root causes of racism, promotes diversity in leadership, and encourages open and honest conversations about race.

Limitations. The study involved a relatively small number of leaders, and they didn't fully represent the diversity of people working in European football.