

****Challenging online racism in (English) football****

Article. Kilvington, D. & Price, J. (2019). Tackling online abuse. Critically assessing England football's response to online racism. *Communication and Sport*, 7, 64, 79

Link. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21674795177453>

Aim. Racist abuse directed at footballers and others involved in the sport on social media is a growing problem, and current efforts to address it are falling short. This article explores and reflects on the response of English football's institutions, organizations, and clubs to the problem of racism on social media.

Method. The researchers spoke with officials from organizations like the Football Association (FA), the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA), and Kick It Out – a leading anti-discrimination group – as well as club staff. They also analyzed existing reports and studies on racism in sport and social media.

Key findings. What the research finds is a lack of coordination and consistency in how different stakeholders in England approach the issue. While Kick It Out actively monitors and reports abuse, the FA doesn't consistently communicate with them, potentially underestimating the scale of the problem. Clubs often operate in relative secrecy around these issues, and training for players and staff is relatively inconsistent. Players themselves are often reluctant to report abuse, finding it time-consuming or fearing unwanted attention. The research also points to broader issues. Social media can amplify racism, allowing prejudiced views to spread more easily due to a sense of anonymity and reduced social inhibitions. Racism in sport isn't just about individual incidents; it's often a systemic problem embedded within the structures of sports organizations. Different groups, like British Asian female footballers, can experience racism in unique ways. Addressing this requires a more unified and proactive approach. Better communication between organizations, clear guidelines for dealing with abuse, and increased resources are essential. Investing in training and support for players is also crucial. Ultimately, tackling online racism in football requires addressing the underlying societal issues that fuel prejudice.

Limitations. The research faced some challenges in gaining access to interviewees, particularly from clubs and players, and the FA. This limited scope of the study means the findings may not fully represent the experiences of everyone who is potentially involved in the problem. Despite such limitations, the findings underscore the urgent need for a more coordinated and effective response to online racism in football.