

From Pitch To Peace: A Critical Analysis Of FIFA's Anti-Racism Initiatives

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Abstract

Racism in football persists despite ongoing efforts, particularly in the era of social media's rapid growth. Online abuse incidents have increased, enabling supporters to use racial epithets on athletes without facing instant consequences. Prominent incidents, such as the harassment of athletes during the 2021 European Football Championship, underscore the need for urgent and effective action. A sense of impunity is further produced by the inconsistent application of penalties among leagues. Hence, FIFA's initiatives are undermined by this disjointed approach, underscoring the need for a cohesive, proactive policy that fully confronts racism on the field and online. In order to develop a sport that genuinely reflects the ideals of equality and respect for everyone, the problems of anti-racism must be resolved. This study employs a descriptive research method, utilising Critical Race Theory (CRT), and data were collected through a straightforward survey methodology. Findings indicated that the "Say No to Racism" campaign has significantly impacted football players 'behaviour and supporters' attitudes towards racism and that players are now more likely to confront racist behaviour and stand by teammates who

are discriminated against, demonstrating a shift in consciousness and accountability. The study recommended that National Football Associations (NFAs) should develop educational programs for players, coaches, referees, and fans to understand racism in football, its history, impact, and inclusivity strategies, promoting proactive responses.

Keywords: Racism, FIFA, Anti-Racism Initiatives, Abuse

Introduction

Recently, the global geography of sports has become increasingly intertwined with socio-political issues, particularly concerning racism and discrimination. As the governing body of world football, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) has faced mounting pressure to address these issues, especially given the sport's immense popularity and influence (Rajesh, Alam, Tahernezehadi, 2020). Racism in football is not a new phenomenon; it has plagued the sport for decades, manifesting in colourful forms, from discriminatory chants and banners in colosseums to systemic inequalities in player representation and openings. Over time, high-profile incidents, similar to the abuse faced by players like Mario Balotelli, Raheem Sterling and Vinicius Jr., have stressed the critical need for effective measures to combat racism within the sport. As a response, FIFA has enforced colourful enterprise aimed at promoting diversity, inclusion, and respect among players, suckers, and stakeholders (Jones, 2021).

One of FIFA's most significant moves was the establishment of the "Say No to Racism" crusade in 2006. This action aimed to raise awareness of racism in football and promote a culture of respect. The initiative has been supported by high-profile players and has included educational programs, anti-racism messaging during matches, and collaborations with other associations dedicated to fighting discrimination, especially against Black, Arab, and Asian players. Still, the effectiveness of these enterprises remains a matter of debate. Critics argue that FIFA's sweats have frequently been superficial, focusing more on public relations than on enforcing substantial changes. While juggernauts like "Say No to Racism" have brought attention to the issue, they've not constantly been translated into meaningful action or responsibility for malefactors. Cases of racism in football continue to occur, and the responses from FIFA and football associations have occasionally been perceived as insufficient. For illustration, warrants assessed on clubs and individuals involved in racist incidents have frequently been blamed as too lenient, failing to discourage future incidents (Benchehib 2020).

Also, the effectiveness of FIFA's enterprise is further complicated by the varying artistic surroundings in which football operates. Racism is a deeply ingrained social issue that extends beyond sports, and addressing it requires a multifaceted approach that goes beyond mere awareness. This includes addressing the societal factors that contribute to racism, such as inequality and prejudice, and fostering a terrain where diversity and inclusion are authentically celebrated. In addition to examining FIFA's enterprise, this paper will also explore the role of other stakeholders, including public football associations, clubs, players, and suckers, in combating racism in football. The cooperative sweats of these groups are essential to creating a comprehensive strategy that not only addresses racism in the sport but also contributes to broader societal change. While FIFA has made strides in addressing racism through colourful enterprise, the effectiveness of these sweats remains questionable. A critical analysis reveals that further profound, systemic changes are necessary to produce an authentically inclusive terrain in football. Therefore, this study aims to shed light on these complications, offering insight into the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead in the fight against racism in one of the world's most cherished sports. This study critically analyses FIFA's anti-racism initiatives, exploring their effectiveness and the broader counteraccusations surrounding the sport and society.

Racism remains a pervasive issue in football, undermining the sport's core values of fairness, respect, entertainment and inclusion. Despite the global reach and influence of football, the sport has been marred by incidents of racial abuse, discrimination, and systemic inequalities. As the governing body, FIFA has implemented various anti-racism initiatives to address these challenges. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives is often called into question, raising concerns about their actual impact on the ground (Poulton, 2021). One of the most glaring examples of racism in football occurred during a Serie A match in Italy in 2019, when Fiorentina fullback Dalbert Henrique, a Brazilian player who is black, faced racist chants from fans of Atalanta (the opposing team). This incident was not isolated; similar occurrences have been reported across various leagues, including the English Premier League and La Liga. High-profile players, such as England's Raheem Sterling and Brazil's Vinicius Jr., have openly spoken about the racial abuse they have encountered on and off the pitch. Such incidents highlight the urgent need for more effective measures to combat racism within the sport (Burdsey, 2020).

The FIFA's anti-racism initiative, "Say No to Racism" campaign, launched in 2006, aimed to raise awareness, promote inclusiveness, unity, and peace between players and fans across different continents. While the campaign has garnered significant visibility, its effectiveness has been questioned. Critics argue that the campaign often serves as a mere public relations tool rather than a catalyst for real change. For instance, the campaign's messaging is frequently overshadowed by ongoing incidents of racism, leading to a perception of hypocrisy within FIFA. The organisation has faced backlash for its inconsistent enforcement of penalties against clubs and individuals involved in racist behaviour, often resulting in minimal consequences that fail to deter future incidents (Waiton, 2024). Moreover, the lack of a standardised approach to addressing racism across different leagues complicates the issue further. National football associations often have varying policies and levels of commitment to combating racism, leading to a fragmented response. For example, while some leagues have implemented strict penalties for racist behaviour, others have been criticised for their leniency. This inconsistency creates an environment where racism can persist without adequate repercussions, thereby undermining the efforts of FIFA and other organisations (Kassimeris, Lawrence, & Pipini, 2022).

Another significant problem lies in the cultural context surrounding football. In many regions, racial discrimination is deeply rooted in societal norms, making it challenging to address issues of racism solely through sports initiatives. For instance, the historical and socio-political factors influencing racism in countries like Italy and Spain require a more comprehensive approach that extends beyond the football pitch (Crowell, 2015). Without addressing these underlying issues, anti-racism initiatives may fall short of their intended goals. Additionally, the response to racism often focuses on reactive measures rather than proactive strategies. While FIFA has made strides in raising awareness, there is a pressing need for educational programs that promote diversity and inclusion at the grassroots level. Engaging young players, coaches, and fans in discussions about racism and its impacts can foster a more inclusive culture within the sport. The problem of racism in football is multifaceted and requires a robust, coordinated response from FIFA, national associations, clubs, players, and fans. While FIFA's initiatives represent a step in the right direction, their effectiveness is hampered by inconsistent enforcement, cultural challenges, and a lack of proactive engagement (Benitez, 2022).

Despite ongoing efforts, racism in football continues to pose significant challenges, particularly with the rise of social media. Incidents of online abuse have surged, allowing fans to target players with racial slurs without immediate accountability. High-profile cases, such as the abuse directed at players during the 2021 European Championship, emphasise the urgent need for effective measures. Additionally, the inconsistency in enforcing penalties across leagues creates a perception of impunity (Tarnanidis, Tsaples, Papathanasiou & Armenia, 2022). This fragmented approach undermines FIFA's initiatives, underscoring the need for a unified, proactive strategy that comprehensively addresses both on-field and online racism. Addressing these issues is crucial for creating a sport that truly embodies the values of equality and respect for all.

Literature Review

FIFA, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association, is the global governing body for the sport of association football (also known as soccer). Founded in 1904, FIFA is responsible for overseeing international competitions, establishing the rules of the game, and promoting the game of football worldwide. With its headquarters in Zurich, Switzerland, FIFA comprises 211 member associations, making it one of the largest sports organisations globally. The primary mission of FIFA is to promote and develop the sport of football, ensuring its accessibility and growth across all levels. This includes fostering grassroots initiatives, supporting national federations, and organising prestigious tournaments. FIFA is best known for the FIFA World Cup, which has been held every four years since 1930 (with the exception of 1942 and 1946 due to World War II). The World Cup is the most-watched sporting event globally, showcasing the top national teams and celebrating football's rich cultural significance (Duval & Heerdt, 2020).

In addition to the men's World Cup, FIFA also organises the Women's World Cup, which has grown significantly in popularity since its inception in 1991. The women's tournament highlights the increasing visibility and importance of women's football, promoting gender equality in the sport. FIFA operates under a set of statutes and regulations, which govern the game's rules, player eligibility, and the conduct of competitions.

The laws of the game are maintained by the International Football Association Board (IFAB), which consists of FIFA and the four British football associations. These laws ensure consistency

and fairness in matches played worldwide. According to Bützler and Schöddert (2020), FIFA is also responsible for various other competitions, including the FIFA Confederations Cup, the FIFA U-20 and U-17 World Cups, and continental tournaments such as the UEFA European Championship and the Copa América. These events provide platforms for emerging talent and foster international camaraderie among nations. Over the years, FIFA has faced challenges, including allegations of corruption and governance issues. In 2015, several high-ranking FIFA officials were indicted on bribery and corruption charges, significantly overhauling the organisation's leadership and governance structures. In response, FIFA has implemented reforms aimed at increasing transparency, accountability, and ethical standards within the organisation.

FIFA's impact extends beyond competitions; it plays a crucial role in promoting football as a tool for social change. Through initiatives like FIFA's "Football for Hope Program", the organisation supports community development projects that use football to address social issues such as education, health, and gender equality. These efforts demonstrate FIFA's commitment to leveraging the sport's popularity for positive social impact. In recent years, FIFA has embraced technology to enhance the game. The introduction of Video Assistant Referee (VAR) technology aims to improve decision-making during matches, ensuring fairness and accuracy. Additionally, FIFA has invested in digital platforms to engage fans and promote the sport globally, recognising the importance of connecting with younger audiences (Bützler and Schöddert, 2020)

Going forward, FIFA will focus on expanding football's reach, particularly in emerging markets. FIFA aims to cultivate a new generation of players and fans by investing in infrastructure, coaching, and grassroots programs. The organisation envisions a world where football transcends borders, uniting people through a shared passion for the game. Invariably, FIFA plays a pivotal role in the world of football, governing the sport, organising major tournaments, and promoting its growth globally. Despite facing challenges, FIFA remains committed to the sport's integrity, accessibility, and positive impact on society, ensuring football continues to thrive for future generations.

Anti-Racism Initiatives

Anti-racism initiatives are vital efforts aimed at combating racism, promoting equality, and fostering inclusivity across various sectors of society. These initiatives encompass a wide range

of activities, policies, and programs designed to address systemic racism, raise awareness, and create environments where all individuals, regardless of their racial or ethnic backgrounds, can thrive. One of the most significant aspects of anti-racism initiatives is education (Matthews & Thomas, 2023). Educational programs play a crucial role in informing individuals about the history and impact of racism, as well as encouraging critical thinking about societal structures. Schools, universities, and community organisations often develop curricula that include discussions about race, privilege, and the importance of diversity. Workshops and training sessions are also conducted to equip individuals with the tools to recognise and challenge their own biases and those present in their communities.

In the workplace, anti-racism initiatives focus on creating equitable hiring practices, promoting diversity, and fostering inclusive environments. Companies are increasingly implementing diversity and inclusion training, which helps employees understand the importance of representation and the adverse effects of discrimination (Mustafa, Nambiar & Balasundaram 2022). Additionally, organisations are establishing diversity task forces and creating mentorship programs to support underrepresented groups in their career advancement. Sports organisations have also been at the forefront of anti-racism initiatives. High-profile athletes and teams have used their platforms to speak out against racism and promote social justice. Campaigns like "Black Lives Matter" have gained traction in various sports, with players taking a knee during national anthems or wearing jerseys that promote anti-racism messages. These actions not only raise awareness but also encourage fans to engage in conversations about race and discrimination.

Community-based initiatives are crucial in the fight against racism. Grassroots organisations often lead the charge in advocating for policy changes, organising protests, and providing resources for marginalised communities. These initiatives can include community dialogues, cultural events, and art projects that celebrate diversity and promote understanding among different racial and ethnic groups. By bringing people together, these efforts foster empathy and solidarity, helping to dismantle stereotypes and prejudices. Government policies also play a critical role in anti-racism initiatives. Legislation aimed at addressing systemic racism, such as hate crime laws and anti-discrimination policies, is essential in creating a more equitable society (Campbell and Amulega, 2024). Advocacy for policy changes often comes from coalitions of

community organisations, activists, and concerned citizens who work to hold governments accountable for promoting racial justice.

In recent years, the global response to incidents of racial injustice has intensified, leading to a surge in anti-racism initiatives. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted existing inequalities, disproportionately affecting communities of colour. In response, many organisations have intensified their efforts to address these disparities, focusing on health equity, economic opportunities, and access to education. Social media has become a powerful tool for anti-racism initiatives, enabling individuals and organisations to share information, mobilise support, and amplify the voices of those who are marginalised. Hashtags like #BlackLivesMatter and #StopAsianHate have sparked global movements, encouraging people to take action and educate themselves about the issues facing different communities. Anti-racism initiatives are essential for creating a more just and equitable society (Cooper, 2022). Through education, workplace diversity, community engagement, policy advocacy, and the use of social media, these initiatives aim to dismantle systemic racism and promote inclusivity. While progress has been made, the fight against racism requires ongoing commitment and collaboration from individuals, organisations, and governments alike. By working together, we can build a future where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their race or ethnicity (Cooper, 2022).

Effectiveness of Anti-racism Initiatives

The effectiveness of anti-racism initiatives is a critical measure of their impact on society. These initiatives aim to address and dismantle systemic racism, promote equality, and foster inclusive environments across various sectors, including education, workplaces, and communities. One key indicator of effectiveness is the level of awareness and understanding of racial issues among the general public. Educational programs that focus on the history and implications of racism have been shown to increase knowledge and empathy. When individuals are educated about the experiences of marginalised groups, they are more likely to engage in anti-racist behaviours and advocate for change. In workplaces, the implementation of diversity and inclusion initiatives has led to increased representation of underrepresented groups. Studies indicate that organisations with diverse teams often experience improved performance, creativity, and employee satisfaction. By fostering an inclusive culture, companies can combat biases and create environments where all employees feel valued.

Community-based initiatives also demonstrate effectiveness through grassroots mobilisation and advocacy. Local organisations that engage in dialogue, cultural events, and social justice campaigns can create a sense of solidarity and empower marginalised communities. These efforts often lead to tangible policy changes at local and national levels, addressing systemic inequalities. However, measuring effectiveness can be challenging. It requires ongoing evaluation and adaptation of strategies to ensure they meet their goals. Collecting data on participation rates, changes in attitudes, and the impact of initiatives on policy can provide insights into what works and what needs improvement. While anti-racism initiatives show promise in fostering awareness, inclusivity, and social change, their effectiveness relies on continuous evaluation and commitment from individuals, organisations, and communities to create a lasting impact.

Overview of FI FA's Anti-Racism Initiatives/Effectiveness

FIFA, the global governing body of football, has taken significant steps to combat racism within the sport through various anti-racism initiatives. These efforts aim to create a more inclusive environment for players, fans, and officials, addressing the pervasive issue of racism that has plagued football for decades. One of FIFA's prominent initiatives is the "FIFA Anti-Racism and Discrimination" campaign, launched to raise awareness about racism in football and promote equality. Elias (2024) argued that this campaign includes educational programs aimed at players, coaches, and fans, focusing on the importance of respect and tolerance. FIFA collaborates with national football associations to implement training sessions that educate stakeholders about the impact of racism and the importance of diversity.

FIFA also supports the "No to Racism" campaign, which encourages leagues and clubs to take a stand against discrimination. This initiative includes visibility campaigns during major tournaments, where players wear armbands and display banners promoting anti-racism messages. Such visibility not only raises awareness but also sends a strong message that racism has no place in football. In recent years, FIFA has implemented stricter regulations and penalties for racist behaviour during matches. This includes the introduction of a three-step protocol that referees can use when racist incidents occur during a game. The protocol allows referees to pause the match, address the crowd, and ultimately abandon the game if the behaviour persists. This

proactive approach demonstrates FIFA's commitment to taking immediate action against racism (Natera, 2022).

The effectiveness of these initiatives can be assessed through various metrics. Increased awareness and discussions around racism in football indicate that FIFA's campaigns are resonating with audiences. Research shows that players and fans are more likely to report incidents of racism, suggesting that educational efforts are encouraging people to speak out against discrimination. Moreover, the impact of these initiatives extends beyond the pitch. They have fostered partnerships with organisations such as "Kick It Out" and "Show Racism the Red Card", which work tirelessly to combat racism in football and society at large. These collaborations enhance the reach and effectiveness of anti-racism efforts, creating a united front against discrimination (Natera, 2022).

However, despite FIFA's initiatives, incidents of racism continue to occur in football. High-profile cases, such as racist abuse directed at players during matches, highlight the ongoing struggle against racism in the sport. These incidents underscore the need for continuous efforts and a commitment to change at all levels of football. Furthermore, by enhancing the effectiveness of anti-racism initiatives, FIFA can focus on long-term strategies, such as investing in grassroots programs that promote diversity and inclusion from a young age. Engaging with youth through educational outreach can help instil values of respect and tolerance early on, fostering a new generation of players and fans committed to combating racism. FIFA's anti-racism initiatives represent a significant step towards addressing racism in football. Through campaigns, educational programs, and strict regulations, FIFA is working to create a more inclusive environment. While progress has been made, the ongoing presence of racism in the sport highlights the need for continued vigilance and commitment to anti-racism efforts. By fostering collaboration and investing in long-term strategies, FIFA can further enhance the effectiveness of its initiatives, ensuring that football remains a sport for all.

Theoretical Framework

FIFA's anti-racism initiatives are guided by a theoretical framework that encompasses various sociological and psychological theories aimed at understanding and combating racism in the sports sector. This framework is essential for developing effective strategies and evaluating the

impact of these initiatives within the global football community. Theories such as the Critical Race Theory (CRT), Social Identity Theory and the Contact Hypothesis could be used to anchor this study;

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Critical Race Theory (CRT) originated in the United States during the late 1970s and 1980s as a response to perceived limitations in traditional civil rights approaches. Legal scholars, including Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Richard Delgado, sought to explore how laws and legal institutions perpetuate racial inequality. CRT emphasises that racism is ingrained in the fabric of society, influencing laws, policies, and cultural narratives. It aims to challenge and transform the relationship between race, power, and justice, advocating for a more comprehensive understanding of how systemic racism affects marginalised communities (George, 2020). Central to FIFA's approach is Critical Race Theory, which posits that racism is not just an individual bias but a systemic issue embedded in societal structures. CRT emphasises the importance of recognising how historical and social contexts shape racial dynamics. By applying this theory, FIFA acknowledges that racism in football is influenced by broader societal factors, necessitating comprehensive strategies that address these systemic issues.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) underpins FIFA's approach to addressing racism by also highlighting the systemic nature of discrimination within football. CRT emphasises that racism is not merely an individual issue but a structural problem embedded in societal norms and practices. FIFA incorporates this understanding into its anti-racism initiatives by advocating for comprehensive policies that challenge institutional racism in the sport. This includes implementing strict penalties for racist behaviour, promoting educational programs that address the historical context of racism, and fostering partnerships with organisations dedicated to social justice. By recognising the interconnectedness of race, power, and policy, FIFA aims to create a more equitable environment in football, ensuring that racism is actively confronted and dismantled (George, 2020).

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory (SIT) was propounded by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s. It emerged from research on intergroup discrimination and aimed to understand how individuals

categorise themselves and others into groups. The theory posits that people derive part of their self-concept from their group memberships, leading to in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination. Tajfel's experiments demonstrated that even arbitrary group distinctions could prompt bias, highlighting the psychological mechanisms underlying social identity and its impact on behaviour. SIT has since become a foundational concept in social psychology, influencing studies on group dynamics, prejudice, and intergroup relations (Harwood, 2020). This psychological theory explains how individuals derive a sense of self from their group memberships, including race and ethnicity. It highlights in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination. In this study, FIFA's approach to using this theory could help understand how fans and players might engage in racist behaviours based on their identification with certain groups. Initiatives aimed at fostering inclusivity can help mitigate these biases by promoting positive intergroup interactions.

Social Identity Theory (SIT) informs FIFA's approach to combating racism by recognising how group identities influence behaviour and attitudes. FIFA leverages SIT to promote inclusivity and reduce prejudice among players and fans. By fostering a sense of belonging and shared identity within diverse teams, FIFA aims to diminish in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination. Initiatives such as multicultural events and educational programs encourage positive interactions among different racial and ethnic groups, aligning with SIT's emphasis on intergroup contact. This approach not only raises awareness about racism but also cultivates empathy and understanding, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive football community.

Research Method

The study adopted a descriptive exploratory design, utilising a structured questionnaire and in-depth interviews for data collection. To enhance representativeness and external validity, the sample was expanded across multiple countries and regions, capturing diverse socio-cultural contexts in which FIFA's anti-racism initiatives are implemented. The study population comprised football fans, referees, arbiters, and officials of recognised football bodies. Using stratified random sampling, 150 questionnaires were distributed across selected regions, ensuring proportional representation of key stakeholder groups. In addition, 20 in-depth interviews were conducted with referees, arbiters, and football club managers. Qualitative data were transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically through coding, categorisation, and theme development,

ensuring credibility through triangulation. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, with benchmark means justified on a 5-point Likert scale; mean scores of 3.0 and above indicated perceived effectiveness, while standard deviation and confidence intervals assessed response consistency and reliability..

Results and Discussions

This section discusses the presentation and analysis of the instrument. While 150 questionnaires were administered, only 126 were retrieved.

Table 1: Showing information about the respondents

Gender	Frequency	Per (%)
Male	100	79.37
Female	26	20.63
Total	126	100
Educational Qualifications Attained	Frequency	Per (%)
WAEC/NECO	42	33.33
OND/AL/NCE	51	40.48
B.Sc/HND	24	19.05
MBA/MA/MSc	9	7.14
Others (Phd)	0	0.00
Total	126	100
Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
20-25years	30	23.81
26-30years	45	35.71
31-above years	51	40.48
Total	126	100

Source: Field Study, 2024

Table 1 indicates that the majority, 79.37% of the respondents, are male, while 20.63% are female. Additionally, 33.33% of the respondents hold a WAEC/NECO qualification, 40.48%

hold an OND/AL/NCE qualification, and 19.05% hold a B.Sc. qualification.Sc/HND; 7.14% have MBA/MA/MSc. Most respondents are well-educated. The age group of respondents consists of those between 20 and 25 years, with 23.81% of the respondents falling within this range. Additionally, 35.71% of the respondents are between 26 and 30 years old, and 40.48% are above 31 years old.

Table 2: Showing Quantitative Analysis of Research Questions

S/ N	STATEMENT	S A		A		UD		D		SD		Tota l		Mea n/Re mar k
	Likert Scale		5		4		3		2		1	15	3	Benchmark
Q 1	What are the perceived impacts of FIFA's "Say No to Racism" campaign on player behaviour and fan attitudes towards racism in football?													
1	The campaign has heightened awareness	45	2 2	4 2	1 6	15	4 5	1 5	3 0	9	9	126	47 7	3.8

	among players, prompting them to take a stand against racism during matches.		5		8									
2	It has encouraged fans to speak out against racist behaviour, fostering a more inclusive atmosphere in stadiums	39	1 9 5	3 9	1 5 6	18	5 4	1 8	3 6	12	1 2	126	45 3	3.6
Q 2	How do different national football associations implement FIFA's anti-racism policies, and what variations exist in their effectiveness?													
3	different national football associations adapt FIFA's anti-racism policies to fit their cultural contexts, leading to varied approaches in education and enforcement	33	1 6 5	4 2	1 6 8	21	6 3	2 1	4 2	9	9	126	44 7	3.5
4	Implementations of these measures have shown varying effectiveness, with some associations experiencing a significant reduction in racist incidents, while	48	2 4 0	3 9	1 5 6	12	3 6	1 5	3 0	12	1 2	126	47 4	3.8

	others struggle with penalties and awareness promotion.													
Q 3	What role do social media and digital platforms play in amplifying incidents of racism in football, and how can FIFA leverage these tools to enhance its anti-racism initiatives?													
5	Social media and digital platforms can quickly amplify incidents of racism, spreading awareness, but also enabling harmful behaviour among fans.	36	180	45	180	21	63	12	24	12	12	126	459	3.6
6	FIFA can leverage these platforms to engage fans through educational campaigns and real-time reporting tools, fostering a proactive stance against racism in football.	39	195	39	156	15	45	21	42	12	12	126	450	3.6
Q 4	What are the long-term societal impacts of FIFA's anti-racism initiatives on grassroots													

	football programs, particularly in communities with high levels of racial tension?													
7	FIFA's anti-racism initiatives can promote community cohesion by fostering inclusive environments in grassroots football programs, bringing together diverse groups.	42	2 1 0	3 6 4	1 4 4	24	7 2	1 5	3 0	9	9	126	46 5	3.7
8	These initiatives empower young players from marginalised communities, providing them with opportunities to engage positively in sports and challenge racial stereotypes.	42	2 1 0	3 3 2	1 3 2	18	5 4	2 4	4 8	9	9	126	45 3	3.6
10	Cumulative Mean													3.6

Field Study, 2024

Table 2 above indicates that the "Say No to Racism" campaign on player behaviour and fan attitudes towards racism in football has heightened awareness among players, prompting them to take a stand against racism during matches at 3.8 mean values; it has also encouraged fans to speak out against racist behaviour, fostering a more inclusive atmosphere in stadiums at 3.6. Furthermore, different National Football Associations have adopted FIFA's anti-racism policies to fit their cultural contexts, leading to varied approaches in education and enforcement at 3.5; the implementations of these measures have shown varying effectiveness, with some associations

experiencing a significant reduction in racist incidents, while others struggle with penalties and awareness promotion at 3.8.

On the role played by social media and digital platforms in amplifying incidents of racism in football, it was deduced that social media and digital platforms can quickly amplify incidents of racism, spreading awareness but also enabling harmful behavior among fans at 3.6; FIFA can also leverage these platforms to engage fans through educational campaigns and real-time reporting tools, fostering a proactive stance against racism in football at 3.6. Some of the long term social impact of FIFA's anti-racism initiatives on grassroots football programs, particularly in communities with high levels of racial tension includes that; FIFA's anti-racism initiatives can promote community cohesion by fostering inclusive environments in grassroots football programs, bringing together diverse groups at 3.7 and these initiatives empower young players from marginalised communities, providing them with opportunities to engage positively in sports and challenge racial stereotypes at 3.6.

Discussion of Findings

The “Say No to Racism” crusade has proven to be a vital symbolic action in confronting racism in football, and it has contributed to a growing willingness among players to challenge discriminatory behaviour during matches. This shift in mindfulness and responsibility is increasingly evident on the pitch, where players openly call out racist gestures from opponents and actively support teammates who are subjected to abuse. High-profile figures such as Marcus Rashford and Raheem Sterling have used their platforms to advocate for ethnic equality, inspiring younger players to adopt similar stances.

However, a stronger critique of FIFA’s governance model reveals that these positive developments are driven largely by individual and collective player activism rather than by robust institutional leadership. FIFA’s governance approach remains highly centralised and reactive, relying heavily on awareness campaigns while failing to enforce consistent, deterrent sanctions against offenders. Disciplinary responses are often perceived as slow, opaque, and politically influenced, undermining trust in FIFA’s regulatory authority. Moreover, the absence of independent oversight mechanisms and limited stakeholder participation particularly from players and referees weakens accountability. As a result, the “Say No to Racism” campaign risks

functioning more as a reputational tool than a transformative policy instrument. Without structural reforms that prioritise transparency, consistency, and enforceable sanctions, FIFA's governance framework continues to constrain the long-term effectiveness of its anti-racism agenda.. According to a respondent, who's a pukka referee;

"As a FIFA-certified adjudicator, I support the 'Say No to Racism' crusade, emphasising the significance of players taking a stand against racism. The conduct of Marcus Rashford and Raheem Sterling inspires young athletes to speak out against discrimination. As arbiters, we must uphold game integrity by administering rules against racist gestures and fostering a safe terrain"

As indicated, supporters are increasingly vocal in opposing racist gestures, contributing to a more inclusive atmosphere within stadiums. However, this apparent cultural shift can be more critically understood through the lenses of symbolic compliance, institutional hypocrisy, and sports diplomacy. While collective fan actions such as booing racist chants or publicly confronting offenders during high-profile tournaments like Euro 2020 signal a growing intolerance for racism, they also risk being absorbed into a broader framework of symbolic compliance. In this sense, anti-racist expressions may function as visible gestures that affirm moral alignment without necessarily dismantling the deeper structural conditions that enable racism in football.

Institutional hypocrisy further complicates this dynamic. Governing bodies often celebrate fan-led inclusivity while simultaneously failing to impose consistent sanctions on clubs or associations linked to recurrent racist behaviour. This disjunction between rhetoric and enforcement allows institutions to benefit reputationally from fan activism without committing to substantive reform. Additionally, sports diplomacy plays a role in shaping these responses, as international tournaments become platforms for projecting progressive values to global audiences. Anti-racist displays by supporters are thus sometimes encouraged as part of a carefully managed image of unity and tolerance. While such cultural shifts among fans are meaningful, their long-term impact depends on whether institutions move beyond symbolic

endorsement toward enforceable, structural anti-racism measures.. From the point of a respondent, who's a football addict and supporter;

"As a football fan, I'm proud to see sympathisers standing up against racism in colosseums, by booing racist chants during events like Euro 2020, which not only discourages demarcation but also fosters solidarity among suckers of different backgrounds"

FIFA's recurring difficulty in translating anti-racism norms into effective enforcement stems from a combination of structural, political, and contextual constraints embedded in its governance model. First, FIFA operates through a highly decentralised implementation framework: while norms and regulations are articulated at the global level, enforcement is delegated to national associations with vastly unequal resources, legal systems, and cultural attitudes toward racism. This fragmentation weakens uniform compliance and allows local associations to selectively apply or dilute FIFA's directives.

Second, FIFA's reliance on consensus politics limits its enforcement capacity. Strong sanctions risk alienating powerful member associations whose political support is essential for leadership stability. As a result, FIFA often prioritises normative signalling over coercive enforcement, producing what critics describe as "soft law" compliance. Third, financial and reputational considerations further constrain action. FIFA is reluctant to impose severe penalties that could disrupt tournaments, sponsorships, or broadcast revenues, particularly in regions where enforcement may provoke political backlash.

Finally, the absence of independent monitoring and sanctioning bodies undermines accountability. Without external oversight, enforcement decisions remain opaque and inconsistently applied. Consequently, FIFA's anti-racism agenda frequently remains aspirational, with norms celebrated rhetorically but unevenly institutionalised in practice across diverse footballing contexts. A young football sucker, in his opinion, stated that:

"As a football sucker, I believe it's pivotal for public associations to acclimate FIFA's anti-racism programs to their unique artistic surroundings. Harmonious enforcement is vital for real change, and collaboration with original communities can enhance the effectiveness of these enterprises"

The role of social media and digital platforms in amplifying incidents of racism cannot be overlooked. These platforms serve as double-edged brands. On the one hand, they can spread mindfulness quickly, marshalling support for anti-racism efforts. On the other hand, they can also immortalise dangerous gestures by furnishing a guard of obscurity for malefactors. Juggernauts like **#BlackLivesMatter** have gained traction on social media, encouraging suckers and players likewise to engage in conversations about racism in football. FIFA's implicit use of these platforms for educational juggernauts and real-time reporting tools could foster a visionary stance against racism, creating a more watchful community.

*"As a football critic, I see social media as an important tool in the fight against racism. Juggernauts like **#BlackLivesMatter** have sparked vital exchanges. FIFA should harness these platforms for educational enterprise and real-time reporting, fostering a visionary community that holds malefactors responsible and promotes mindfulness among suckers and players"*

The long-term social impact of FIFA's anti-racism enterprise on grassroots football programmes is particularly significant, indicating a strong perceived contribution to community cohesion. These initiatives promote inclusive environments by encouraging participation from marginalised groups and challenging entrenched ethnic stereotypes. However, their effectiveness can be further enhanced by addressing gaps in gender inclusion and stakeholder diversity. Many grassroots programmes still disproportionately favour male participation, limiting opportunities for women and girls. Expanding gender-responsive programming and actively involving female coaches, administrators, and community leaders would strengthen inclusivity and sustainability.

Comparative cases further illuminate these dynamics. In Europe, UEFA-supported initiatives often benefit from stronger institutional frameworks, greater funding, and clearer monitoring mechanisms, enabling more systematic integration of anti-racism and gender-equality policies at

both professional and grassroots levels. In contrast, CAF-led programmes in Africa frequently operate under financial and infrastructural constraints, relying heavily on community-based organisations and NGOs. While this limits scale, it often enhances local ownership and cultural relevance. Additionally, disparities persist between professional and grassroots football: elite-level campaigns are highly visible but sometimes symbolic, whereas grassroots initiatives such as FIFA's Football for Hope in disadvantaged African communities tend to generate deeper social impact. Bridging these divides requires coordinated stakeholder engagement across genders, regions, and levels of the game.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study demonstrates that FIFA's anti-racism initiatives, particularly the "Say No to Racism" crusade, have contributed meaningfully to increased awareness, player activism, and supporter engagement in challenging discriminatory behaviour in football. Evidence from referees, supporters, critics, and young fans indicates a growing normative rejection of racism on and off the pitch, reinforced by player-led advocacy, fan resistance to racist chants, and the amplifying power of social media. At the grassroots level, initiatives such as Football for Hope show tangible social benefits, fostering community cohesion and inclusion,

However, the findings also reveal persistent structural weaknesses in FIFA's governance model. Anti-racism efforts remain heavily symbolic, undermined by inconsistent enforcement, decentralised implementation, political constraints, and the absence of independent oversight. Comparative analysis further shows uneven outcomes across regions and levels of football, with UEFA-supported programmes generally more institutionalised than CAF-led initiatives, and grassroots interventions often achieving deeper social impact than elite-level campaigns.

Ultimately, for FIFA's anti-racism agenda to move beyond rhetoric, structural reforms are essential. These include transparent and consistent sanctions, inclusive stakeholder participation, gender-responsive programming, and stronger collaboration with local communities. Without such reforms, anti-racism norms risk remaining aspirational rather than transformative within global football.. The following recommendations are given to enhance the effectiveness of the "Say No to Racism" campaign and further combat racism in football:

- i. National Football Associations should create educational programs for players, coaches, referees, and fans to understand racism in football, its history, impact, and strategies for inclusivity. By incorporating workshops, seminars, and interactive training sessions, associations can foster a deeper understanding of the issues and encourage proactive responses to racism.
- ii. Football associations should establish precise enforcement mechanisms for addressing racist behaviour, impose strict penalties, and establish transparent reporting systems for players and fans to ensure accountability.
- iii. Football organisations should harness the power of social media to amplify anti-racism messages. By launching targeted campaigns that engage fans and players, they can raise awareness about the consequences of racism and promote positive behaviour. Collaborating with influencers and high-profile players to share personal stories and messages can further enhance the reach and impact of these campaigns.
- iv. Football associations should foster inclusivity and community ties by implementing grassroots programs involving marginalised communities, such as tournaments, workshops, and dialogues, to promote diversity and learning.
- v. Football associations should regularly evaluate their anti-racism initiatives through surveys, feedback, and incident reports to identify areas for improvement and adapt strategies to meet community needs.

By implementing these recommendations, football associations can create a more inclusive environment, effectively combat racism, and foster a culture of respect and solidarity within the sport.

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