


Chapter 34

Instigators and Victims of Racism Abuse in Football: Are the Same, Different, or What?

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ABSTRACT

The current research provides a mapping of the most important instigators and victims of racism abuse in football. Based on the literature review findings, it is observed that in sports, there exists an upward trend of racism incidents among different stakeholders on a daily basis, from the administrative workforce and distinct policy makers to athletes and fans. In order to investigate this trend, data was collected through the implementation of a specific project, called “BRISWA,” which is an EU-funded project that deals with the problem of racism in football and in sports in general (funded by the Erasmus+ Programme - Sport Collaborative Partnership). The survey was conducted in the field of football in six countries, Italy, Greece, Romania, Serbia, Hungary, and Bulgaria. The survey took place from August 2017 to January 2018. Our sample included people of all ages ($n = 672$). Data was analyzed through a combination of exploratory factor analysis and multi-criteria decision analysis. We have modeled the two distinct constructs, by running principal component analysis and then on the ranked data followed the results of the multi-criteria decision aid analysis with the Promethee software. A thorough discussion and conclusions are given for the improvement of regulations at a European level, to tackle the incidents of racism abuse in the sphere of football.

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INTRODUCTION

Football has a vital role in creating a peaceful and inclusive society as it has the unique privilege of bringing together millions of people, regardless of their sex, color, gender, age, nationality or religion. Speaking about racism in football, many researchers argue that the sport has a vital role in creating a peaceful and inclusive society as it offers the unique opportunity to bring together millions of people, regardless of their sex, color, gender, age, nationality or religion (Back et al., 2001; Bradbury, 2011; Hylton, 2009; Ruddock, 2005). However, nowadays there is a growing consensus that the problem of racism is particularly widespread in society, in general. For example, almost during every match we witness situations that see certain players or fans of a team as targets of racist insults. Up to date the academic discourse on measuring the construct of instigators within the mainstream football literature has been sparse, and there are relatively few empirical studies (Long et al., 2000; Holland, 1996; Chu et al., 2014). Therefore, the objectives of this research are the following:

- To develop a parsimonious model that conceptualizes instigators and victims of racism, abuse in football; and
- To analyze its efficacy with the use of multicriteria decision-aid analysis.

In doing so, the next parts analyze the current state of the art, literature review that served in identifying all the potential elements that affect and influence the appearance of racism incident, while the forthcoming part includes the methodology used together with the data analysis, and the final part provides the concluding remarks and recommendations to relevant decision-makers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Racism in football is not a new phenomenon; it emerged in the late 1970s and it has persisted ever since (Cashmore and Cleland, 2014). There might have been periods where it seemed that the phenomenon was eradicated, but it lingered silently in the background. Phenomena of racism appear in many sports, but tend to be more visible in football, due to its popularity, its coverage and the number of people that are engaged in it at all levels (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2013). By scanning the literature it is identified that in the south countries of the European Union, like Italy, the impact of racism became widespread through Italian stadiums, as many groups became affiliated (Podaliri & Balestri, 1998). However, racism in Italy appears to have an effect on the abuse against the slightly darker players coming from southern Italy. This racism was especially evident in games between northern and southern teams (Lanfranchi and Wagg, 1995; Kassimeris, 2011). Therefore, the racism in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s originates from societal causes. Similarly, no matter the direction of racism, several events in the last years of 1980s, like the effort by the clubs to create a more civilized setting for the football games by increasing the admission price. Related to that, Back et al. (2001) observe that until the mid 1990s the debate about racism in football was almost exclusively focused on the problem of fan behavior. In fact, challenging racism was initially grouped into the wider objective of dealing with hooliganism and fascism towards multiple types of instigators (Doidge, 2015). To that extent, different academics and analysts started noticing the more subtle forms of racism at the same period. For example, black players have consistently accounted for more than 10% of all players in the various championships, yet only 1%

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