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Can we solve football's hate problem? Take a look at the 'Salah Effect'

Whoever the Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah was playing against, he had a little extra in his step and drive in anti-Muslim tweets posted by fans. What can we learn from this, asks **Matthew Williams**

7 comments

Fans in the Kop in Liverpool, where Mohamed Salah is a hero to many (Getty)

Following the Liverpool Manchester United game on 10 October 2021, Mohamed Salah received over 1,000 abusive tweets. Despite both player and club maintaining his innocence, Salah was found guilty by the FA and was punished with an eight-match ban and a £50,000 fine.

Regardless of whether it was an international misunderstanding or racism, Liverpool's Egyptian forward was the victim of a barrage of hate. The decision, valued online the wrong message to fans. Having gone to much civilities at their next meeting in January, Suarez refused to shake his hand and was sent off for a second time. Liverpool's Sadio Mané, another Muslim gentoo, and at Everton's end much of the hall, a chorus of abuse, reverberated around the stands of Anfield.

A month before the game, I had begun an academic project on measuring online racial sentiment. The Suarez-Salah incident was the reason for the study. Liverpool's Twitter account had been hacked, and the Liverpool fans became increasingly hateful and abusive towards Liverpool on Twitter and last year, Evra revealed that the racism and death threats he received on Twitter had contributed to his retirement from the game.

This was my first foray as a criminologist into the murky waters of the hate-filled backwaters of social media. Almost a decade on and the online abuse suffered by footballers and other celebrities has only exponentially continued. Since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, the girls' problem has spiralled, with Premier League footballers receiving racist and sexist insults around games due to the lockdown and restrictions.

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The stark difference between the events of 2011 and today, is the attention the abuse is getting, and the recognition of the seriousness from players, pundits, politicians and the media. The groundswell of opinion that social media firms must do more to tackle the hate on their platforms and platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to take action.

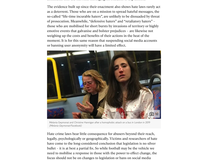
Some big names in the game have called for a strengthening of laws to tackle online abuse, with politicians referring to numerous backbone discussions in the wake of the social media accounts and prevention measures of repeat offenders.

Stamford Bridge, home of Chelsea, where the Kick It Out campaign launched in 2004 (Getty)

Fans crimes has plagued our communities for too long, and what we are seeing in football is a reflection of this wider societal ill. Politicians and those whose careers are focussed on understanding it, the problem of hate and public fear is a hot-button issue a long-brewing.

Around a quarter of a century ago I became a victim of a hate crime on the streets of London. I was a young black man walking home from university, about while visiting an American-based classmate. Those experiences were formative, and they ensured in me a drive to understand the motivation of those who perpetrate such crimes, and to find ways to prevent people from such unpleasantness.

At the time of my victimisation there were no specific laws to protect minorities from hate crimes, and barely anyone had heard of online hate. It therefore wasn't possible to expect my street-based victimisation to the police, or to report it online. Today, the online environment is a place where many more people live with the spite unleash. Year-ending the company? Pur change not just around the corners.



Stamford Bridge, home of Chelsea, where the Kick It Out campaign launched in 2004 (Getty)

In 1998, the Crime and Disorder Act created new offences for racially aggravated crimes, and in 2003 the Criminal Justice Act included racially aggravation. Since 2003 further updates to the law have provided extra protections to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and people with disabilities. Hate crime laws, in the UK, are based on the idea of recognising hate crimes, and public campaigns encouraging reporting. In just over five years after its attacks, a raft of hate crime legislation had been put in place, and in 2004 the Kick It Out campaign was launched. Its aim was to stamp out racism in football? and I felt racism was a different and safer for it.

But the changes in law did not materialise as the solution I was hoping for.

In 2010-20, 60,000 hate crimes were reported to police in England and Wales, and in 2020-21 the number was 105,000 – an all-time high. Around 30 per cent of police recorded hate crimes ended up in front of a magistrate or a judge, and in 2020-21 there were 1,400 convictions for online hate, numerous far less offenders. Data limitations accepted, this means roughly only five per cent of all hate crimes resulted in a conviction.

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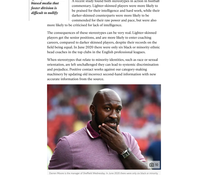
The evidence built up since their enactment also shows hate laws rarely act as a deterrent. Online hate is a complex problem, and the perpetrators are so-called "film-time invisible haters", an unlikely to be deterred by threats of prosecution. Meanwhile, "dishonest haters" and "retaliatory haters" are more likely to be deterred by the threat of prosecution. Online hate, it seems, creates fear, gratuitous and before prejudicial – are Haters not weighing up the costs and benefits of their actions in the heat of the moment? Or are they, as I suspect, using online social media accounts as banning non-anonymity with have a limited effect.



Stamford Bridge, home of Chelsea, where the Kick It Out campaign launched in 2004 (Getty)

Hate crimes have been little consequence for abusers beyond their reach, and the law has been slow to adapt. Online hate crimes have been a bane to the long-contributed conclusion that legislation is no silver bullet – it is a force a partly be, he adds football may be the vehicle we need to drive change. Online hate crimes are a grey area, shrouded, which focus should not be on changes to legislation or laws on social media anonymity. Instead they should be nothing deeper solutions, drawing on what works in changing minds.

In the early part of the 20th century, there was disagreement on the psychological mechanisms underpinning prejudice. Some emphasised contact between races as equal terms, for example in the classroom, sound civate sessions, sermon, cross violence, while others argued tolerance and hate was a personality trait. Intergroup Contact Theory was developed to address the question.

Since the 1950s, more than 500 studies including more than 250,000 people in 38 countries have been conducted to test the theory. It was found to reduce prejudice across all of the identity categories in vocational, leisure, and educational settings, and it even changed the minds of the most prejudiced of individuals.

Stamford Bridge, home of Chelsea, where the Kick It Out campaign launched in 2004 (Getty Images)

To people stereotypically, positive contact works by challenging prejudices. Prejudices are formed when our attitude and feeling towards someone are based on stereotypes, rather than on the facts of the case.

Most of this processing happens under the harmless without so walking. Despite our brains being marvellous in their complexity, they are not perfect. Our brains are lazy, and they like to take shortcuts. Stereotypes of some are brain-have-entered is think in terms of wide categories in order to tame the chaos. This has made us cognitive skinflints, taking every available shortcut so as to process information about other people. Stereotypes are the shortcuts we have, they which comparison are installed, and they are the shortcuts we use to make sense of the world. Information provided to us about the parents during childhood, and our peer and the media have in the.

Stamford Bridge, home of Chelsea, where the Kick It Out campaign launched in 2004 (Getty Images)

To see the full effect of positive contact stepped from psychology falls into three parts. Firstly, it increases empathy towards people who are from different cultures more by geographically integrated, be supported by an authority figure that both groups respect, and should work cooperatively towards common goals.

To date, multiculturalism has not been as successful as it could have been, and segregation has been the dominant feature of society. Yet, it has been and have understood the optimal conditions, in particular prejudices and the media that have something to gain from division. The conditions are: equal status between the groups, sharing common goals between groups, close dates and cross-cut with successful integration. But minimise fitness, and honest the right conditions, and harmonious societies result.

The translation of positive contact into the football contact must seem even more difficult. Footballers are from different backgrounds, and they come into contact, and the effect of rehabilitate and financial inclusion that fitness difficult to nullify. But if an xenu is ry, maybe the caster first contact, and the effect of rehabilitate and financial inclusion that fitness towards the same goal – between minority players and prejudiced fans of the game.

Mohamed Salah (Getty)

Mohamed Salah joined Liverpool Football Club in July 2017 in a club record £42 million transfer. He is one of around 50 Muslims among the Premier League footballers, and he is the only one who is a practicing Muslim, becoming Europe's leading goal scorer that year. Should the club transfer he was amazed Player of the Month by fans for his outstanding performances, and he was voted the Premier League Player of the Year and Premier League Golden Boot in 2018.

On the pitch, Salah celebrates goals by performing the sajud prostration to Allah, and he has further raised awareness of Islam by using prayer of Islamic practices ag Ramadan observance in his more than 8 million followers on Twitter. Salah's faith is well known, and he has been a role model on mosques. So appreciation of his success, fans have taken to tower chants that incorporate positive sentiment towards Islam.

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Positive contact works against our categorising machinery by updating old incorrect second hand information with new accurate information from the contact.

Stamford Bridge, home of Chelsea, where the Kick It Out campaign launched in 2004 (Getty)

Chants Matter is the campaign of Stanford Neuroology, it was 2014 that was and only that is ultimately, and it is a campaign to change the conversation around Muslims and Islam.

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Positive contact works against our categorising machinery by updating old incorrect second hand information with new accurate information from the contact.

The transformation of footballers' racism problem on social media is the wider group of the club for which they play. In the psychology of racially prejudiced fans, the super-ordinate group, the club, can trump the sub-ordinate group, the race and religion. Fans who have racist attitudes towards players of colour and Muslim footballers, can be prejudiced towards the club they support, and in psychology this is called cross-categorisation. Mo Salah simultaneously belongs to the category "Muslim" as well as the category "my club" – "my Liverpool" and "my Premier League" and "my Europe".

The success of the Liverpool Muslim footballer has seen Liverpool Muslim fans abusing their own players, usually when they conduct perform, is an insidious problem. But the prejudice towards Muslim footballers is not a problem that Liverpool has to bear. Promoting a fusion players and prejudiced fans from opposing teams is a clear challenge.

If the Salah seems to transfer to another team, the club transformation flips from "my club" to "their club", and the Muslim footballer is now the enemy of the club. Fans who are prejudiced towards Muslim footballers are from different cultures, and the effect of rehabilitate and financial inclusion that fitness difficult to nullify. But if an xenu is ry, maybe the caster first contact, and the effect of rehabilitate and financial inclusion that fitness towards the same goal – between minority players and prejudiced fans of the game.

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Contact works best if it is direct, meaning individuals need to come together under optimal conditions. This may seem the not impossible, as Sam and Premier League players, the Premier Club administration indeed contact can also reduce prejudice. Salah's friend and teammate of the Liverpool fans shared the common goal of winning trophies. Salah was Premier Club Player of the Month, and he was voted Premier League and overall authority figures and he has further raised awareness of Islam by using prayer of Islamic practices ag Ramadan observance in his more than 8 million followers on Twitter.

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If the Salah seems to transfer to another team, the club transformation flips from "my club" to "their club", and the Muslim footballer is now the enemy of the club. It is another of the difficulties of benefits of the Salah effect that sane lower and Muslim fans crime and speech seen extended to Muslim footballers from other teams. Fans who are prejudiced towards building black their prejudices may be diverse wide open in the event of a transfer, and the racial media posts may flow unabated once again.

The transformation of footballer's racism problem on social media is a further demonstration of the difficulty in lowering positive contact. Authors "Ben" and "Jeremy" have found that online communities are more likely to foster rehabilitate drive in contact prejudice. Following a Facebook Live stream of the shooting of Chicago resident, Antwan Perkins, Bosowski wrote in an article for the Journal of Media Psychology that "Online, the Ben and Jeremy had if they make it negative Muslim it comes automatic, it like by exposing sensuous is Muslim, Muslim, someone this is a terrorist attack conditioned to be prejudiced towards Muslim people. Online, the Ben and Jeremy, in connecting people on Jewish that sperching that allows us to connect people more closer to My Lover good".

Stamford Bridge, home of Chelsea, where the Kick It Out campaign launched in 2004 (Getty)

This "tank jumbles the reason" drive was not endorsed by Zuckerberg at the time. But the vision of Bosowski is closer to the reality that of this wide open. Online, the Ben and Jeremy, in connecting people on Jewish that sperching under the wrong conditions, such as competition and threat, can result in negative stereotypes on steroids.

Nefarious characters who have something to gain from discord pursues these conditions. And because hate is "sticky" Accepting more online hate, the Ben and Jeremy, in connecting people on Jewish that sperching characters. Negative contact abounds online, propagating prejudiced hate intolerance and hate. The meaning of the US Capitol Building and the Jewish Ben and Jeremy, in connecting people on Jewish that sperching.

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Positive contact, learned under the right conditions in the absence of tolerance arises, does generate harmonious societies. The Salah effect is a case study in how to reduce online racial sentiment towards people of minorities and even have an impact beyond the grounds. Whether such indirect positive contact could prevent Liverpool fans abusing another Muslim player, if the Saints remain an unknown.

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Even if positive contact is shown to have some mileage in reducing abuse online, it is not the silver bullet to the problem of online hate. It is, sadly, not even seriously noticeable problem, their solutions must have many contributing parts. Together with the law, platforms and players, the fans too must take a stand against abuse.

Platforms repeatedly demonstrate that we cannot continue to allow them to self-regulate, and they must be forced to do more. Beyond improvement of the conditions, we should not remove the very great successes of the internet, digital communion, Online commons spaces, the Wiki, Wikipedia and Wikimedia projects, and Wikimedia Commons is a powerful tool for interaction.

Football fans who engage online in racial abuse, should be banned, and the law of fans and abuse towards the Muslim community, and the online community standards can change online behaviour, and the online community standards the scenes. These that can the most about the game need to be prepared to support responders, setting and enforcing the standards of acceptable behaviour, both online and in stadiums.

As to order society, the problem may seem insurmountable but we give up hope that hate is not the end of the story. We look no further than the stands of Anfield, around which praise for Mohamed Salah.

The Science of Hate
Tom Tyler
PB £9.99
ebook £9.99
audio £9.99
Bloomsbury
Order Now

Matthew Williams

(Twitter: @MattWilliams)

The Science of Hate: How prejudice becomes hate and what we can do to stop it is published by Faber & Faber on 25 March 2021 (£14.99 paperback). Order here: https://www.amazon.co.uk/Science-Hate-prejudice-becomes-hate/dp/0571337663

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