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Player Safety In The National Football League

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Player Safety In The National Football League

Abstract

This research was conducted to determine to what extent National Football League fans want player safety rules in the game of football. The NFL received backlash from not only a tremendous amount of fans but players as well. It was essential for the NFL to determine what a happy medium was in order to keep the players safe while they played the game of football, but also the physicality was a large part of the game that the fans loved. The NFL player safety rules reduced the amount of injuries that occurred, but fans and players believed that the rules took too much away from the game.

A survey was created that was aimed to collect a variety of ages, races, and locations that represented the whole fan spectrum of the NFL. Since the survey was posted on reddit, the sampling method used was key informant technique. Questions ranged from simple demographics, commitment of fandom, and also the support of the player safety rules. Duration and commitment of fandom gauged the level of fandom that determined if level of fandom played into the support of the rules.

Ultimately, each and every fan made a decision regarding whether they cared more about the quality and experience of watching the game or the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of the NFL players. A majority of the sample supported the NFL Player Safety Rules either most of the time or always. This particular variable showed that even though a good amount of participants experienced a worse experience viewing the game, a majority of the sample still supported the safety rules within the game.

This was essential to the NFL due to knowing the fan base. Fans were essential to the league and without a great amount of fans, there was no league. The knowledge of what turned fans away from the league was crucial. There were many variables that played into why fans were drawn to the league or pushed away. Knowing who the fans were and what they thought of the league was essential to the success of the NFL.

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Player Safety in The National Football League: A Changing Game

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Executive Summary

This research was conducted to determine to what extent National Football League fans want player safety rules in the game of football. The NFL received backlash from not only a tremendous amount of fans but players as well. It was essential for the NFL to determine what a happy medium was in order to keep the players safe while they played the game of football, but also the physicality was a large part of the game that the fans loved. The NFL player safety rules reduced the amount of injuries that occurred, but fans and players believed that the rules took too much away from the game.

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Ultimately, each and every fan made a decision regarding whether they cared more about the quality and experience of watching the game or the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of the NFL players. A majority of the sample supported the NFL Player Safety Rules either most of the time or always. This particular variable showed that even though a good amount of participants experienced a worse experience viewing the game, a majority of the sample still supported the safety rules within the game.

This was essential to the NFL due to knowing the fan base. Fans were essential to the league and without a great amount of fans, there was no league. The knowledge of what turned fans away from the league was crucial. There were many variables that played into why fans were drawn to the league or pushed away. Knowing who the fans were and what they thought of the league was essential to the success of the NFL.

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to determine what the fans of the National Football League thought about the player safety rules that had been implemented in the past decade. The research question of this study was:

To what degree do NFL Fans want player safety rules?

The aim of this research was to present a deeper understanding on what the fans thought of the player safety rules that have changed the game of football. For years, the league had put player safety at the top of their priority list and rule changes had taken away from the physical nature of the sport.

Within the past decade, the United States of America had experienced unfortunate political events. Wetzel (2018) stated that even though the national anthem protest issue was the spark that started the fire for President Trump's bashing of the NFL, he predicted that President Trump's downgraded talk about the league would only get worse in the future. Even though this influential figure had an impact on the NFL viewership, other factors played into the declined ratings. Thompson (2018) stated that there were so many different variables that distracted consumers on why ratings were declined during this stretch of time. Social media, fantasy football, and other variables played into the declined ratings.

The reaction of the fans was traced back to the individual fan motivation and each fan was different in what motivated them to be a fan either of a team or of the sport itself (Martin, 2013; Smith, 2018; Thompson, 2018). In addition, the league had to implement new rules that protected the players from not only short term, but long term injuries as well; specifically, chronic traumatic encephalopathy. Helmet-to-helmet

contact, defenseless receivers, and roughing the passer were points of emphasis throughout the game, which prevented more stars of the league from getting injured (Clark, 2018; Robeson & King, 2014; Siozios, 2016; Thompson, 2018). The reaction from the fans were dependent on different variables that included the players' reactions, what rules were changed, the player's well-being, and how the league handled the reaction to the rules (Mier & Mederson, 2017; Martin, Torre, & Young, 2012; Staff, 2016).

The objective of this research was to study the fans of the NFL and how they reacted to the recent player safety rules. Since the player safety rules were recently implemented and emphasized, there was not a plethora of prior studies. There was a lack of research of what made a fan react the way that they did. It was understood that each fan was different in what motivated them to be a fan, but what fans thought about these rules lacked information (Martin, 2013; Mier & Mederson, 2017; Smith, 2018; Thompson, 2018). However, through the exploratory research of fan motivation and fan reactions, correlations were able to be made on when fans cared more about the nature of the game, rather than the safety of the players.

This research had a practical application because it provided the public with reasoning of why certain fans reacted to a monumental change that occurred within the game of football. This specific research provided examples of different types of fans and how their reactions were based off the demographic variables, fan motivation, and their personal commitment of fandom to the National Football League.

Background

NFL Fan Motivation

Martin (2013) claimed that professional sport fans studied were different in what motivated them to either become a fan of a team or of the sport itself. He explained that NFL teams wanted fans to commit to being loyal fans. The loyal fans had a tendency to support the team through the positive and negative durations. Positive experiences, association with the team, and other factors led to commitments of loyal fans. Marketing research and database marketing allowed the teams to connect to the fans and that made the fans feel associated with the team. The fans typically felt emotionally connected to the team, as if they were on the team roster (Smith, 2018; Thompson, 2018).

There were many different types of sport fans and specifically NFL fans. Categorizing different fans and their opinions helped draw conclusions on how different fans felt. Martin, Torre, and Young (2012) presented the claim of loyal and long-time fans were more likely to stick with and support the NFL through the process of growing pains. The fans that were most likely to boycott this league were the fans that weren't somewhat serious fans to begin with. Also fans that did not typically associate themselves supporting a particular team, tended to have different opinions of the league; opposed to fans that supported a particular team (Mier & Mederson, 2017; Smith, 2018).

The National Football League experienced a decreased rating within the last three years. The discovery of what factors of the game were important to the fans watching, helped the league in the connectivity with the fans over the past 25 years

(Thompson, 2018). Whether it was the big plays on offense, defensive battles, big hits, etc. it was important for the league to know what the consumers liked and disliked about the league. Smith (2018) stated that NFL Films and videos like “Crunch Course” and “Jacked Up” intrigued the fans the most because they loved the gruesome hits that almost every NFL game was full of about 10 years ago. It seemed more than likely that every big hit would result in a penalty. On the other side of the spectrum it was important to determine when fans start to turn away from the game. There were points where the fans started to watch less and less of the games and even boycotted the NFL.

Several authors stated that determining what those factors were that lead fans to decrease the amount of game viewership, had helped explain the recent rating decrease for the NFL (Mier & Mederson, 2017; Thompson, 2018; Smith, 2018). There was a plethora of football highlights, stats, and fantasy scores that tended to catch more people’s interest, than actually watching the whole game. Fans cared more about the results of the game, rather than the progress and the story behind the it (Thompson, 2018). Protests, endless penalties, and lifelong injuries have had a negative impact on the league (Mier & Mederson, 2017). People have looked to and gone to sports to escape negative stress. The NFL did not want to add stress to the sport consumers. Smith (2018) proclaimed that if the NFL was not careful with the implementation and calling of the new rules, the rival leagues like the Alliance of American Football or the Canadian Football League may have taken more viewers away from the NFL. Even though the fans have been a very important aspect of the NFL, the player’s safety was the top priority of the league.

Keeping the Players Safe

A couple of authors had a view on what factors played into the fans deciding to turn away from the game. *The Washington Post*, (2016) wrote about the cluster of 18 teams after week seven in 2016 were at .500 or worse; this showed that teams were not intriguing teams to watch besides their respective fans. There was a less chance that someone would have watched a team that was mediocre and not their favorite team with a bunch of penalties, commercials, etc. that was taking place throughout a game. Typically, when the star player of a team suffered an injury, the team's record and competitiveness suffered as well. Both the team and the league suffered financially as a result of these occurring injuries.

Financial aspects of the NFL decreased when multiple star players were hurt. Although the rule changes made the game safer, it also increased performance for teams and the league financially. The stars of the NFL at the time needed protection from the league to an extent. Thompson, (2018) added many of the most marketable players in 2017 were injured for an extended amount of time like Aaron Rodgers, Andrew Luck, and J.J. Watt. The league made more money when the stars of the league were playing, it made the league more competitive, which provided better entertainment. The league was not making this decision by themselves, they asked coaches, team executives, and owners for their input as well (Thompson, 2018).

Clark (2018) believed that small rule changes like hits against defenseless receivers did not drastically change the game for the players or viewers, but it did result in less severe collisions. Another example that Clark used were the new kickoff rules that were evolving for many years. The touchback, double-team blocking, and other

small rule changes prohibited big collisions on kickoffs. These rules were trickling down throughout all levels of football. For example, NCAA Football rules allowed for the receiving team to “fair-catch” the kickoff in any area of the field; that resulted in a touchback if it was caught before the 25-yard line.

Throughout the past decade, rule changes have changed the game of football significantly. The league implemented, modified, and removed rules that decreased the amount of injuries (specifically head injuries) (Health & Safety Rule Changes, 2017). This was basically done through a trial and error basis. Robeson and King (2014) provided evidence of what was at stake for the NFL players and what duties the NFL held to inform the players on the risk they were taking to play the game. The authors argued that players deserved the right to know what could have occurred throughout their football careers. This included their rights, interests, and health concerning factors that were present. The league presented every player with the precautions that were discovered. Robeson and King (2014) also used examples that supported their research like the scenario Robert Griffin III was in. When Griffin III first injured his knee, he downplayed the injury and the team did not have him present on the injury report. This incident showed that players were sometimes the fault of their own health and the league could do nothing about that. Also the use of Mike Webster’s death and how he had chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) gave credibility to the authors claim. The discovery of CTE was a disease found in the brain due to traumatic hits to the head and multiple concussions.

The NFL paid a great deal of money to the former players and their perspective family that suffered from CTE in 2012. Even though the league did not want to distribute

this sort of money again, the safety of the players was also a major contribution to the league's decision. Many authors had their input on this serious issue of CTE. Out of the 79 former players of the NFL in 2012, 76 of those players were diagnosed with CTE. In 2012, 261 players were diagnosed with concussions. In 2013, there was a 13% drop with only 228 concussions (Still was not good enough). Between these two years, advancements in technology provided easier and cheaper alternatives that would detect symptoms of a concussion (Siozios, 2016). The NFL was doing everything the right way with the money donations to CTE research, rule changes, being a role model for other levels, and being able to soak up advice from around the league (Martin et al., 2012). Comparisons were made from before and after the research took place. Then the findings were made public that all of the life lasting side-effects that head collisions/injuries caused included, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, depression, and other serious side-effects (Robeson & King, 2014). Seifert (2018) used statistics from 2017 to show a record of 291 concussions last season and why the NFL was cracking down on improved helmets, new penalties, fines, and suspensions for players leading with their head.

With the recent rule changes, the league and referees created "points of emphasis" to focus on. Martin et al., (2012) explained that the NFL made helmet-to-helmet contact, defenseless receivers, and roughing the passer points of emphasis throughout the game. The league had set an example for the rest of the levels in football and hoped they would follow in their footsteps in rules, regulations, and equipment measures. According to Clark, (2018) there was a 13% increase in concussions from 2016 to 2017 and it was something that desperately needed to be

fixed. The NFL had made 47 rule changes since 2002 to help reduce concussions and the new helmet-to-helmet and targeting rule was projected to be the most effective rule yet. Smith (2018) added that ultimately, youth football was an essential part of the overall success of the NFL (ratings, participation, interest, etc.) and the league made sure to do everything in their power that sustained or even increased the amount of youth football participation.

Throughout the league, there had been many players that voiced their opinions either through an interview or over social media platforms, regarding the new player safety rules. Even though social media showed all of the bad backlash from the rules, there was less and less backlash with more positive thoughts as the 2018 season moved along. For example, a lineman from the Pittsburgh Steelers, David DeCastro, feared that the NFL took too much physicality out of the game and the more the league took away from the game, it would not be the game of football anymore. On the other hand, an offensive lineman from the Cleveland Browns supported the rule changes and stated that the NFL implemented these changes for the sake of the players' future (Seifert, 2018). The NFL was known as being a hegemonic masculine sport, the players have been known to downplay injuries and also fight through intense, physical pain (Robeson & King, 2014).

Fan Reaction to Player Safety Rules

The findings of fans having a higher reaction to the rules when the players do, showed if the fans really care or if they were just following the players' reactions. Mier and Mederson (2017) provided arguments that NBC broadcasts many of games on Sunday and audiences tended to listen and trust what the commentators had to say due

to their credibility. Not everyone that was watching games on television may have known that numbers and ratings were down so the league/broadcasters portrayed that everything was great. Typically, broadcasters and pregame shows consisted of former NFL players so fans typically soaked up what these figures had to offer. For example, a former NFL Super Bowl winning coach, Tony Dungy downplayed the helmet-to-helmet penalties and blamed the referees for a bad call in 2017. Martin et al., (2012) stated that changing rules that involved less dangerous situations for the players and less reaction from the players typically resulted in less reaction from fans as well. When the players did not publicly complain about the rules and other issues they had with the NFL, the rate of fan reactions to rules were low as well.

The National Football League has been a recipient of backlash from not only fans, but players as well; regarding the new player safety rules. A veteran safety Eric Weddle of the Baltimore Ravens was not afraid of voicing his opinion when he was asked about the newly implemented rules and equipment guidelines for the league. He proclaimed that it was his choice to have whatever helmet he wanted to wear. It was his body at risk and he should have had the right to do what he preferred with his equipment (Seifert, 2018). He was referring to certain helmets that were banned throughout the league due to the recent renovation of helmets.

The Washington Post (2016) created a buzz around the player safety rules in the NFL. Thousands of fans commented on the article and voiced their opinions. For example, an NFL fan for decades was sick of reading about the long lasting side-effects and negative health concerns revolving around concussions in the NFL. That fan was less inclined to watch after the discoveries of CTE. Another fan related to concussions

on a personal level. A close friend of a fan sustained a concussion and has never been right since. The thought of hundreds of NFL players sustaining a concussion every year turned this particular fan away. Another fan commented that he/she used to be a casual viewer, but since the league has not protected the players from head injuries, that fan has boycotted the NFL entirely. There were also many comments from fans that were discouraged from the NFL due to the player safety rules penalties. One fan stated that the NFL was not a players or coaches league, it became a referee's game. Another fan felt that there were too many soft calls on the field and that the rules were ruining the game of football. Finally, a longtime fan focused on the defensive side of the ball. Defenders were getting flagged for simply doing their job. The declined nature of the NFL has turned thousands away from the game including these fans. There were many more negative views from the fans that commented on this article pertaining commercials, fantasy sports' impact, and anthem protests, but the concussion and player safety sections were the most popular.

Summary

The National Football League Office presented the league with new player safety rules that have had reactions from around the league and fans as well. Even though the league put the safety of players before the fans, the fans were the people that drove the finances of the NFL. There were many factors that played into the consideration of fan motivation. Even though the sport of football was historically very physical, the league had to change the rules to keep the players protected. The NFL was in a tough spot to keep the physical nature of the sport alive, but also protect the players that played in the game as well. Even though all of these aspects were important to the game, the

National Football League was a source of entertainment for the fans and they were vital to the league's success as well.

Method

The purpose of this research was to gauge how National Football League fans reacted to the player safety rules that were put into place within the last decade. The research question of this study was:

To what degree do NFL Fans want player safety rules?

The desired sample for this research was a group of all different types of NFL fans. The research was aimed to collect a variety of ages, races, and locations that represented the whole fan spectrum of the NFL. The sampling method used was key informant technique.

Procedure

Reddit was used to not only reach a large sample, but to reach a wide variety of fans as well. Anonymous surveys were administered on reddit. The surveys consisted of continuous and categorical questions. The questions ranged from simple demographics, to specific questions about the fan's views on the player safety rules and how the NFL handled specific problems. For example, one question that was asked on the survey was, "On a scale from 1-5, how much do you care about player safety? (1=do not care at all, 2=somewhat do not care, 3=either way it does not matter, 4=somewhat care, 5= care a lot)."

Age, location, length of fandom, type of fandom, and commitment of fandom were all demographic variables that were measured on a continuous scale in order to gain perspective of who the sample consisted of. These variables measured the degree

of the fan's involvement, and stake that they had in the NFL. How often and how the fans watched games were added to the list of variables that gauged the level of fandom. Other variables included fan motivation, knowledge of rule changes, and emotions each participant had about those rules throughout the past decade. Youth football rules were also taken into consideration on whether youth leagues should have set the bar for rule changes or continue the trickle down method from the NFL down to youth. Other demographic variables that were measured was gender, income, and race which was measured on a categorical scale.

Knowledge of the player safety rules, support of the rules, importance of the rules and the watching experience were all variables that were measured on a continuous scale. The physicality of the game and safety reasoning were also measured continuously. Some other variables that were measured continuously were the fan reactions during the moment of the game that player safety rules were violated and about a month after the game. These variables gauged emotions during the moment a player safety penalty was called and a substantial amount of time after it was called that determined if emotions changed for fans.

Analysis

Since there were multiple fandom groups that were included within the study, the statistical tests that were used were correlations and regressions. The demographic variables that were measured, helped gain perspective on if the fans represented the sample of NFL fans. The other variables gauged the type of fandom, knowledge of the rules, and the importance of the rules. These were all dependent variables that were measured along with one grouping variable that measured the level of fandom. A

regression was used to determine if the descriptive statistics of fan duration, rules that made the game safer, and the support of rules determined whether length of fandom had a relationship with the overall support of rules. The correlation and regression tests that were conducted reported the different groups and their respective responses.

Results

Overall there were 98 total responses to the survey posted on reddit. There were 23 responses that were discarded due to participants not meeting the qualification of completing at least 50 percent of the survey. Therefore, there were 75 valid participants that completed at least 50 percent of the survey. Ninety-two percent of the participants were male (n=69) while 51% of the participants represented 18 to 26 year olds (n=38). Thirty-five percent of the participants made less than \$30,000 per year (n=26). Seventy-nine percent of the participants were white (n=59) and there was not an overall representation of where the participants were located.

Fifty-one percent of the participants were fans of the NFL in a range from 10 to 20 years (n=38), while 89% of total participants felt either very or extremely attached to their specific team (n=67). Also, 96% of the participants either typically watched the game or always watched the game of their favorite teams (n=72) and 67% of the participants were very to extremely knowledgeable on all of the major player safety rules (n=50). Forty-five percent of the participants supported the player safety rules most of the time (n=34) but it made 47% of the participants viewing experience of the game somewhat to much worse (n=35). Forty-eight percent of the participants also answered that they would not want the rules if it resulted in more injuries (n=36) and

79% of the participants somewhat to strongly agreed that the rules made the game safer (n=59).

The original alpha used was .05 and the Bonferroni-adjusted alpha was .01. There was no significant relationship between the game viewership and the rules that made the game safer, $r=-.021$ $p>.05$. There was no significant relationship between the game viewership and the belief that rules negatively affected the game, $r=-.065$ $p>.05$. There was a significant relationship between the viewing experience of games with the rules and the importance of the rules, $r=.585$ $p<.05$. There was no predictive relationship between the predictor variables of importance of rules, game viewership, and the outcome variable of team attachment, $F(2,72) = 1.079$, $r=.102$, $R^2=.010$, $p>.05$. There was no predictive relationship between the predictor variables of support of rules, game viewership, and the outcome variable of team attachment, $F(2,69) = 1.181$, $r=.132$, $R^2=.017$, $p>.05$.

Discussion

The sample that was collected was not a valid representation of the NFL fan population. For example, women comprised about 45% of the fan population and 92% of the participants in the survey were males (n=69). Another example was that hardcore fans took up 89% of the sample when the NFL population only obtains around 67%. Even though there was a wide range of fans regarding age and location, the sample did not represent the NFL fan population regarding gender, fan dedication, and also race since the sample was 79% white (n=59).

Ultimately, fans tended to remain in between whether they wanted the rules or not. Even though forty-seven percent (n=35) of the participants stated that the rules

made the game either somewhat or much worse to watch, 79% of the participants also stated that it made the game safer (n=59). Forty-eight percent of the participants also answered that they would want the rules if it resulted in more injuries for the players. This meant that even though a good amount of fans had a worse experience watching the game, the majority of fans realized that the player safety rules made the game safer and they also prevented injuries.

Each and every fan made a decision regarding whether they cared more about the quality and experience of watching the game or the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of the NFL players. Sixty-one percent of the sample supported the NFL Player Safety Rules either most of the time or always (n=46). This particular variable showed that even though a good amount of participants experienced a worse experience viewing the game, a majority of the sample still supported the safety rules within the game.

Although there were some findings that backed up prior knowledge, there was also some substance that was found that was unknown before the study began. Martin, Torre, and Young (2012) presented the claim that loyal and long-time fans were more likely to stick with and support the NFL through the process of growing pains. The fans that were most likely to boycott this league were the fans that weren't somewhat serious fans to begin with. The findings backed up what the authors already presented. Since the majority of the sample were fans that were attached to a team for 10 to 25 years, the game viewership tended to be very high. This meant that most fans were either very or extremely attached to a specific team and the fans watched their favorite team play most of the time.

Smith (2018) stated that NFL Films and videos like “Crunch Course” and “Jacked Up” intrigued the fans the most because they loved the gruesome hits that almost every NFL game was full of about 10 years ago. Out of the 75 respondents, 26 (35%) of them enjoy big hits on receivers; this response was the most popular. Smith (2018) stated that it seemed more than likely that every big hit on a wide receiver would result in a penalty. These findings backed up what Smith stated and that the hard hits on receivers was a fan favorite.

There was a plethora of football highlights, stats, and fantasy scores that tended to catch more people’s interest, than actually watching the whole game. Fans cared more about the results of the game, rather than the progress and the story behind the it (Thompson, 2018). The findings of the research did not correspond with Thompson and his statements. Forty-nine percent (n=37) of the sample typically watched their favorite team’s game while 47% (n=35), always watched their favorite team play no matter what. These findings greatly negated what Thompson stated and only 4% (n=3) of the participants either sometimes watched or rarely watched.

Thompson (2018) also added many of the most marketable players in 2017 were injured for an extended amount of time like Aaron Rodgers, Andrew Luck, and J.J. Watt. The league made more money when the stars of the league were playing, it made the league more competitive, which provided better entertainment. The findings showed that 79% of the participants agreed that the rules made the game safer (n=59). The majority of the sample agreed with Thompson on how the rules made the league safer and the safer the league was, the better the quality of the on-field product was as well.

Delimitations

Some of the delimitations included the decision that was made on which platform that was used to distribute the NFL Player Safety Rules Survey. This impacted who the survey reached and how many people had the opportunity to take it. Reddit was a great platform for discussion boards and hot topics, but there was not much going on in the NFL which caused less fans to be active on reddit. The collection of primary data on the NFL was a tough decision due to the uncertainty of when the survey would be distributed. Also the titles and descriptions of the survey on reddit made or break whether the participants committed to take the survey. Knowing that reddit was not that active during the time, another platform would have been chosen like twitter. The use of hashtags and images would have enhanced a wide range of fans. This survey also would have been posted during the NFL season. Different calls to action and more intriguing language would have been used as well to catch the attention and interest of the fans.

Limitations

Some of the limitations included the reddit moderators that banned the link of the survey due to it being posted too many times on the platform. Also the number of users on reddit throughout the posting period was another limitation that was encountered. Finally, the number of karma points that were earned through reddit was a limitation due to other users having the power to reward karma points. Prior knowledge to the moderator's ban would have changed the process of posting the link to the survey and being more cautious of when the best times to post were. The distribution of the survey during the NFL season would have increased the number of reddit users and NFL fans

on the platform. Less frequent posting and more time in between posts would have most likely resulted in better received from the reddit users.

Conclusion

The NFL Player Safety Rules were implemented to prevent injuries and overall make the game safer to play. Even though these rules decreased injuries, there had been significant backlash from fans and even some from the players. Since these rules have been implemented, fans around the United States voiced their opinions mostly regarding how these particular rules have made the game viewership worse and these changes ruined the game of football.

A survey was produced to determine whether the fans of the NFL wanted the player safety rules. Questions about demographics, fan duration, level of fandom, support of rules, and more variables measured how much the fans wanted the rules if they did at all. The survey consisted of mostly continuous and scaled questions which had answers that were given numerical values. This method allowed the data to be analyzed through correlations and regressions.

Ultimately, from the 75 NFL fans that were used as the sample showed that NFL fans want the player safety rules. Even though the physicality, and big highlight hits have taken a hit due to these rules, the fans responses showed that player safety and having the best product on the field regarding the players was more important to them. Fans realized why the rules were implemented and a good portion of the fans sacrificed a little of the viewing experience for the safety and well-being of the players. The majority of the NFL fans from this sample wanted player safety rules.

Since the NFL fans were major proponents to the league and their success, the league needed to make sure that they knew what the fans wanted and how the player safety rules impacted their views of the games and NFL as a whole. The NFL needed to stay ahead of MLB and the NBA. The understanding of fans and what they expected from the NFL gave the NFL a great opportunity to grow and become better as an organization.

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