IJIREEICE ISSN (O) 2321-2004, ISSN (P) 2321-5526

International Journal of Innovative Research in Electrical, Electronics, Instrumentation and Control Engineering

Impact Factor 8.414 ⁜ Peer-reviewed & Refereed journal ⁜ Vol. 14, Issue 2, February 2026

DOI: 10.17148/IJIREEICE.2026.14212

A SURVEY FOOTBALL INJURIES ACCORDING TO PLAYING POSITION AMONG ELITE FOOTBALL PLAYERS

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Abstract: Football is one of the most popular and physically demanding sports in the world, and the risk of injury among players remains a major concern for sports scientists and coaches. The purpose of the present study was to conduct a survey to examine the prevalence of injuries among elite football players according to their playing positions. A total of 1000 elite football players aged between 14 and 30 years participated in the study. The participants were categorized into four age groups: 14–17 years, 18–21 years, 22–25 years, and 26–30 years. Data were collected using a self-developed football injury questionnaire adapted from Singh (2012). The study employed a descriptive retrospective research design, and the collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages with the help of SPSS software.

The findings of the study revealed that injuries were more prevalent among defenders (35.33%) followed by offenders/forwards (28.00%), midfielders (20.19%), and goalkeepers (16.33%). Similar patterns were observed across all age groups, where defenders and offenders experienced a higher percentage of injuries compared to midfielders and goalkeepers. The higher injury rates among defenders and offenders may be attributed to frequent physical contact, tackling, and high-intensity movements during match play. The study highlights the importance of position-specific training, injury prevention strategies, and proper conditioning programs to reduce the risk of injuries among football players.

Keywords: Football injuries, playing position, elite football players, injury prevalence, sports injury survey, injury risk factors

I. INTRODUCTION

Football is one of the most widely played sports in the world and involves a high level of physical activity, speed, strength, and endurance. According to global sports statistics, football is played by more than 200 million active players worldwide, including a growing number of women participants. Due to the physical nature of the game, football players are exposed to a significant risk of injuries during training sessions and competitive matches.

Previous studies have reported that the incidence of football injuries ranges between **10 and 35 injuries per 1000 playing hours** (Clain & Hershman, 1989). Football injuries can occur due to various factors such as physical contact between players, sudden acceleration and deceleration, tackling, jumping, and landing movements. These injuries may affect different parts of the body, particularly the lower extremities.

Research has also shown that the risk of injury varies according to playing positions. Defenders and forwards are more frequently involved in physical confrontations and tackles, which increases their susceptibility to injuries. Midfielders often cover greater distances during a match, while goalkeepers are relatively less exposed to contact situations. Several studies have emphasized the importance of understanding injury patterns in football to develop effective injury prevention strategies (Ekstrand & Tropp, 1990; Price et al., 2004).

A study conducted by Jadhav et al. (2008) examined football injuries in relation to field conditions among elite football players aged 16–30 years. The study identified several risk factors associated with injuries and reported that a considerable proportion of injuries were repeat injuries. Understanding the prevalence of injuries according to playing positions can help coaches, trainers, and sports scientists design appropriate preventive measures.

Therefore, the present study was conducted to examine the **percentage distribution of injuries among football players according to their playing positions across different age groups**.

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II. METHODS

Research Design

The present study adopted a **descriptive retrospective research design** to investigate the prevalence of injuries among elite football players according to their playing positions.

Participants

A total of **1000 elite football players aged between 14 and 30 years** participated in the study. The players were selected from different football clubs, universities, and state-level teams affiliated with the All India Football Federation.
The participants were divided into four age groups:

- 14–17 years
- 18–21 years
- 22–25 years
- 26–30 years

Sampling Technique

A **purposive sampling technique** was used to select the participants. This method allowed the researcher to include players who were actively involved in competitive football.

Data Collection Tool

Data were collected using a **self-developed Football Injury Questionnaire**, which was adapted from the questionnaire developed by Singh (2012). The questionnaire consisted of two sections:

1. **Demographic information** such as age, height, weight, and lifestyle factors.
2. **Football injury information**, which included details regarding injury occurrence and playing positions.

Procedure

Prior permission was obtained from the concerned football clubs, universities, and sports authorities. The questionnaires were distributed to the football players along with informed consent forms. The participants completed the questionnaires independently. Data were collected during training camps, tournaments, and inter-varsity competitions.

Data Analysis

The collected data were checked for completeness and accuracy. The responses were coded and entered into **Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16**. Descriptive statistics such as **percentage analysis** were used to analyze the data.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study are presented through tables and figures with appropriate descriptions. The findings are discussed in detail by comparing them with previous studies and relevant literature in the field of sports injury epidemiology.

Table – 1
Percentage (%) of injuries/ injury in playing position among football players.

Sr. No.	***Playing Position***	***Percentage of Injuries/Injury***
1)	Goalkeeper	16.33%
2)	Offender	28.00%
3)	Defender	35.33%
4)	Midfielder	20.19%

Table 1 illustrates the percentage (%) of injuries according to the playing positions of football players. The findings of the present study indicate that 16.33% of goalkeepers reported experiencing injuries**,** whereas 28.00% of offenders (forwards) reported injuries**.** Furthermore**,** 35.33% of defenders reported injuries**,** and 20.19% of midfielders reported injuries**.**

The findings of the study conclude that offenders (forwards) and defenders experienced a higher percentage of injuries compared to goalkeepers and midfielders**.**

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Figure – 1
Percentage (%) of injuries/injury in playing position among football players.

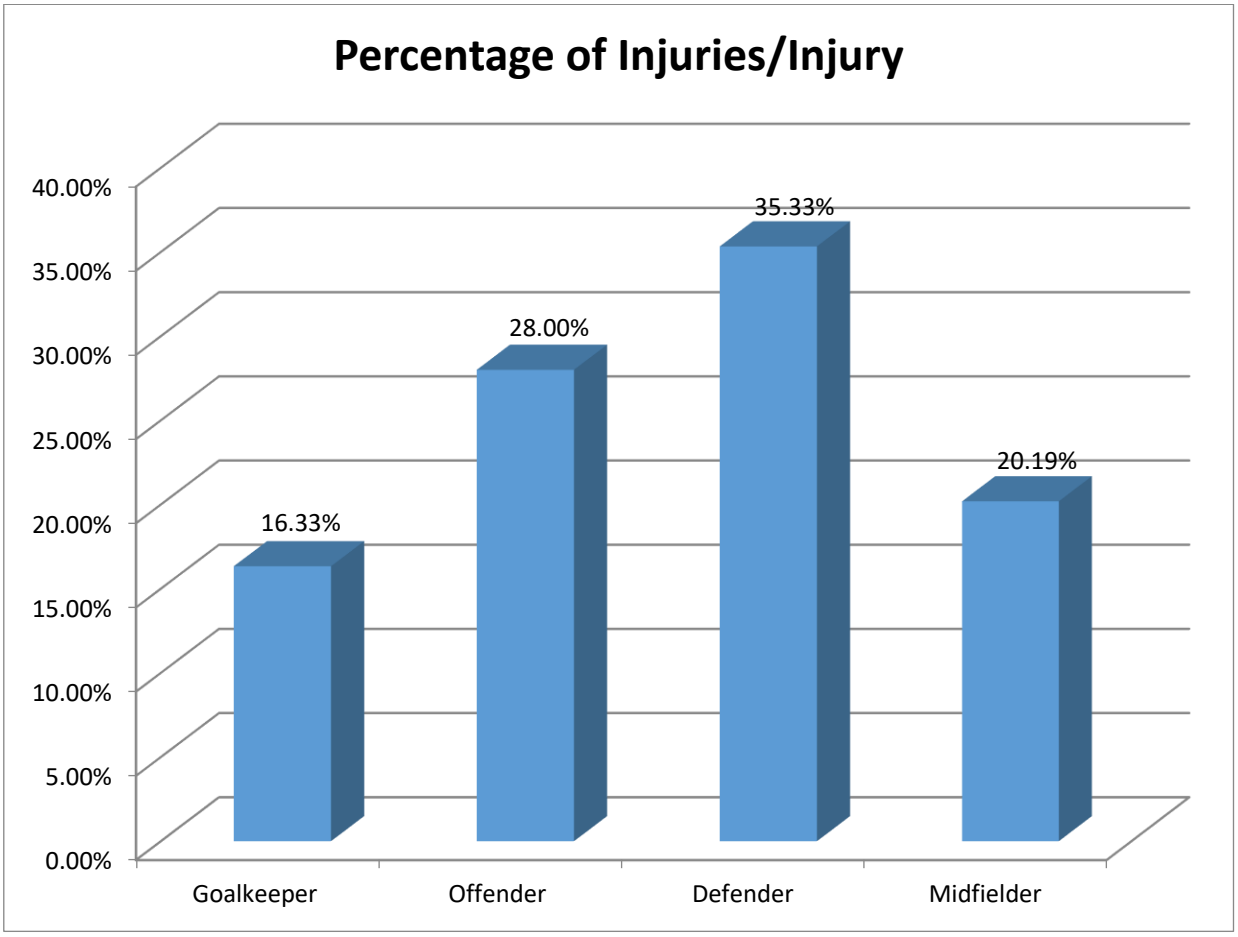

Table – 2
Percentage (%) of injuries/ injury in playing position among Aged group (14-17 Years) football players.

Sr. No.	Playing Position	Percentage of Injuries/Injury
1)	Goalkeeper	18.20%
2)	Offender	27.11%
3)	Defender	33.30%
4)	Midfielder	21.15%

Table 2 illustrates the percentage (%) of injuries according to the playing positions among football players in the **14–17 years age group**. The findings of the present study indicate that 18.20% of goalkeepers in the 14–17 years age group reported experiencing injuries, whereas **27.11% of** offenders (forwards) reported injuries. Furthermore**,** 33.30% of defenders reported injuries**, and** 21.15% of midfielders reported injuries in the same age group.

The findings of the study conclude that offenders (forwards) and defenders in the 14–17 years age group sustained a higher percentage of injuries compared to goalkeepers and midfielders**.**

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Figure-2

Illustrating the percentage (%) of injuries/Injury in playing position of Aged group (14-17 Years) of footballers.

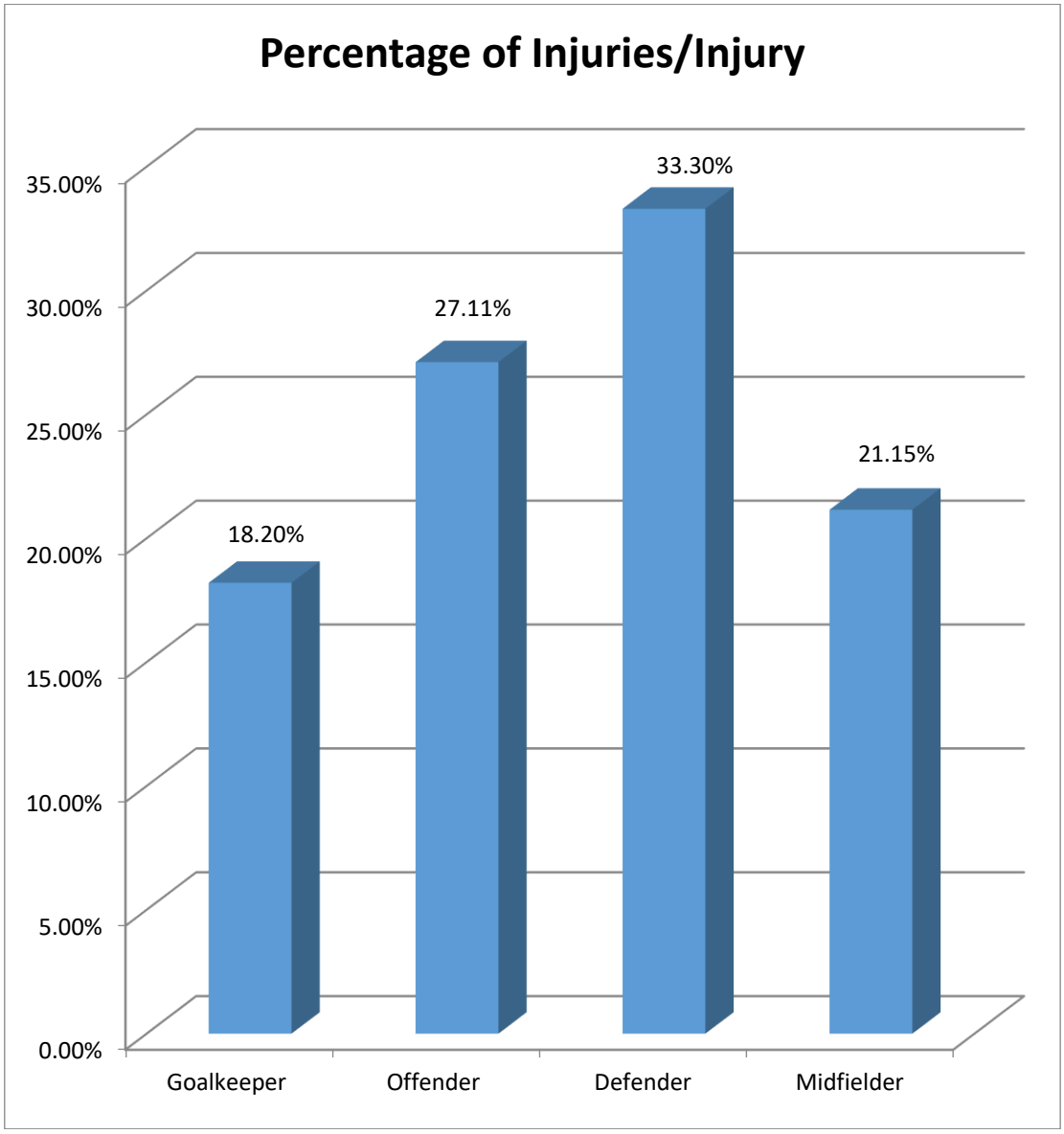

Table – 3

Percentage (%) of injuries/ injury in playing position among Aged group (18-21 Years) football players.

Sr. No.	Playing Position	Percentage of Injuries/Injury
1)	Goalkeeper	16.33%
2)	Offender	28.87%
3)	Defender	32.38%
4)	Midfielder	22.01%

Table 3 illustrates the percentage (%) of injuries according to the playing positions among football players in the 18–21 years age group**.** The findings of the present study indicate that 16.33% of goalkeepers in the 18–21 years age group reported experiencing injuries**, whereas** 28.87% of offenders (forwards) reported injuries**.** Furthermore**,** 32.38% of defenders reported injuries**, and** 22.01% of midfielders reported injuries in the same age group**.**

The findings of the study conclude that offenders (forwards) and defenders in the 18–21 years age group sustained a higher percentage of injuries compared to goalkeepers and midfielders**.**

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DOI: 10.17148/IJIREEICE.2026.14212

Figure-3

Illustrating the percentage (%) of injuries/Injury in playing position of Aged group (18-21 Years) of footballers

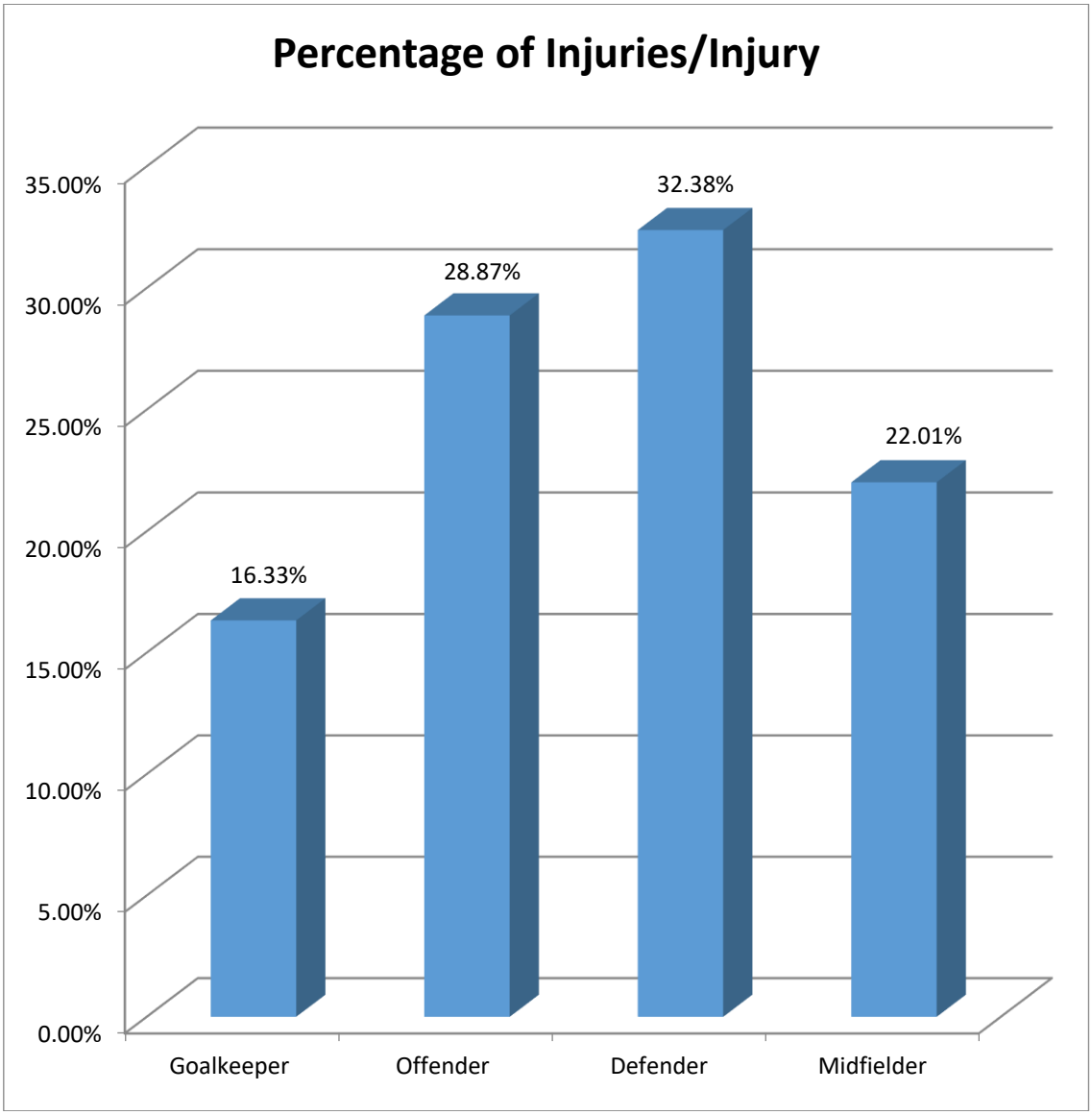

Table – 4

Percentage (%) of injuries/ injury in playing position among Aged group (22-25 Years) football players.

Sr. No.	Playing Position	Percentage of Injuries/Injury
1)	Goalkeeper	18.30%
2)	Offender	28.33%
3)	Defender	32.38%
4)	Midfielder	20.23%

Table 4 illustrates the percentage (%) of injuries according to the playing positions among football players in the 22–25 years age group**.** The findings of the present study indicate that 18.30% of goalkeepers in the 22–25 years age group reported experiencing injuries**, whereas** 28.33% of offenders (forwards) reported injuries**.** Furthermore, 32.38% of defenders reported injuries**, and** 20.23% of midfielders reported injuries **in the same age group.**

The findings of the study conclude that offenders (forwards) and defenders in the 22–25 years age group sustained a higher percentage of injuries compared to goalkeepers and midfielders**.**

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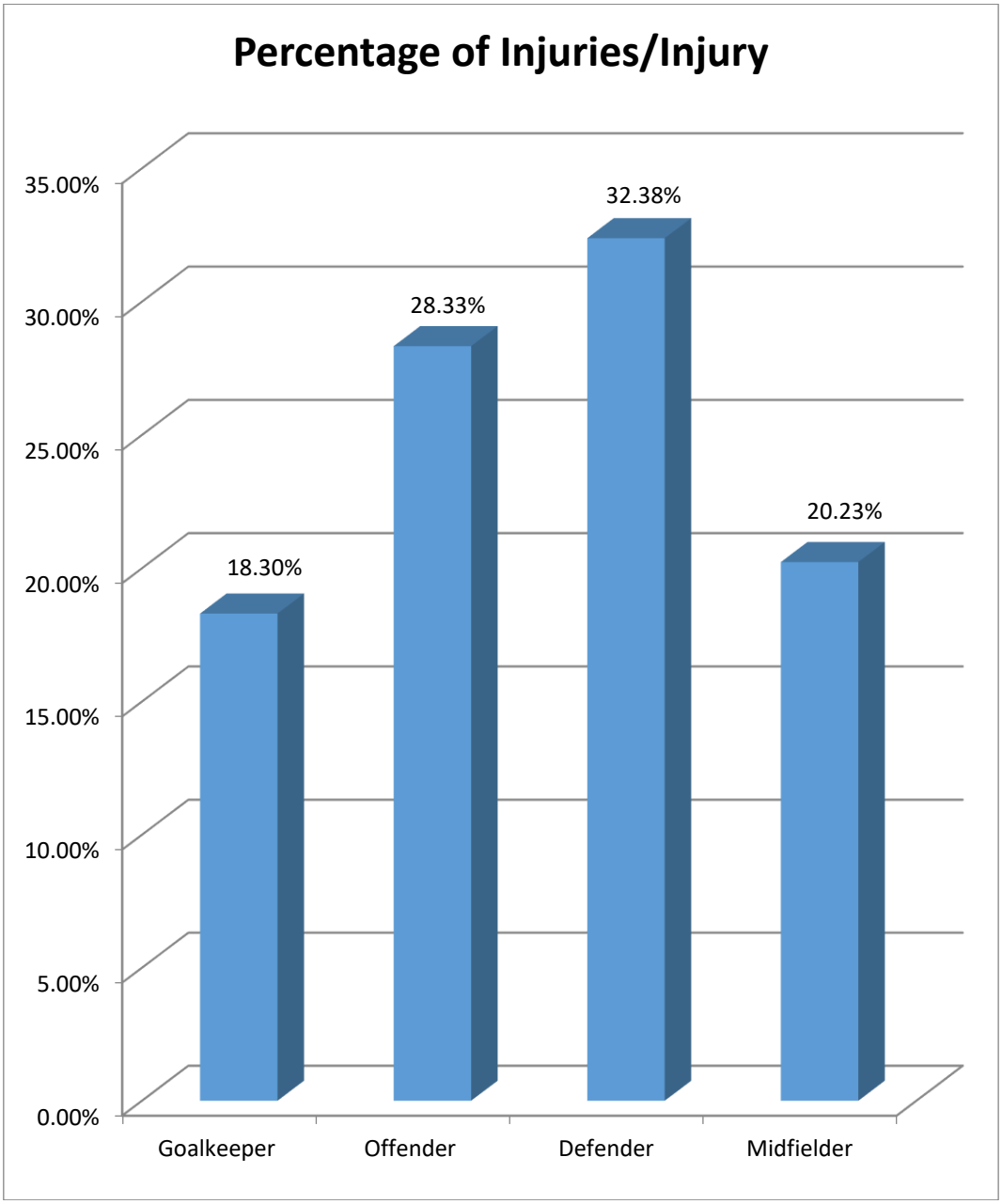
Figure-4

Illustrating the percentage (%) of injuries/Injury in playing position of Aged group (22-25 Years) of footballers.



Discussion

The findings of the present study indicate that defenders and offenders (forwards) experienced a higher percentage of injuries compared to midfielders and goalkeepers. Defenders accounted for the highest proportion of injuries (35.33%), followed by offenders (28.00%), midfielders (20.19%), and goalkeepers (16.33%).

This pattern of injuries may be attributed to the nature of the playing positions. Defenders frequently engage in tackling, blocking, and intercepting opponents, which increases their exposure to physical contact and injury risk. Similarly, forwards are often involved in attacking situations, which involve high-speed movements, sudden changes in direction, and physical challenges from defenders.

The findings of the study are consistent with previous research conducted by Ekstrand and Tropp (1990) and Price et al. (2004), which reported that defenders and forwards have a higher injury risk compared to other playing positions.

DOI: 10.17148/IJIREEICE.2026.14212

Midfielders, although they cover longer distances during matches, may experience relatively fewer contact-related injuries.

Goalkeepers reported the lowest injury prevalence, which may be due to their relatively limited movement across the field and fewer direct physical confrontations compared to outfield players.

The results suggest that position-specific injury prevention programs, strength training, and conditioning exercises should be implemented to reduce injury risk among football players, particularly defenders and forwards.

Limitations of the Study

1. The study relied on **self-reported injury data**, which may involve recall bias.
2. The study focused only on **elite football players**, which may limit the generalization of results to amateur or recreational players.
3. The study used **percentage analysis**, and more advanced statistical techniques could provide deeper insights.
4. Environmental factors such as **field conditions and weather** were not examined in detail.

IV. SOCIETAL BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the present study provide several important benefits for society and the development of sports. The study contributes to a better understanding of injury patterns among football players, which helps in improving player safety and reducing the risk of injuries. The results of the study assist coaches, physical trainers, and sports professionals in designing position-specific training programs to minimize the occurrence of injuries during training and competition.

Furthermore, the study contributes to the development of effective injury prevention strategies in football academies, universities, and sports institutions. A reduction in injury rates can improve sports participation, enhance athletic performance, and increase the career longevity of football players. In addition, the findings of the study may support policymakers, sports organizations, and sports medicine professionals in promoting safer sporting environments and increasing awareness about injury management and prevention in football.

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