

Injury Patterns in Secondary School Cricket: A Case Study of Marondera District, Zimbabwe

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Cricket injuries have not been studied much, especially at school level. This study examined injury patterns in cricket among secondary school students in the Marondera District of Zimbabwe, from 2022 to 2023, with a specific focus on three secondary schools (Peterhouse College, Wise Owl, and Watershed College). The study adopted a retrospective, cross-sectional and case-study approach design. Thirty-one (31) participants, comprising of cricket players (58%), cricket coaches (19,4%), health-care representatives (12,9%) and school administrators (9,7%) were recruited, and provided data for the study. The participants completed a questionnaire which solicited information on their personal information, the prevalence, occurrence, type and severity of injuries sustained, circumstances and factors contributing to the injuries, impact and consequences of injuries on the players, the existence of injury prevention and safety measures, and suggestions for injury reduction.

The study found that

- a). over three quarters (78%) of players sustained injuries while 22% did not
- b). over three quarters of the players (80%) were rarely injured, while slightly over a tenth (13%) were frequently injured and less than a tenth (6,7%) were very frequently injured
- c). almost half (46,7%) of the injuries were frequently reported, while slightly over a third (33,3%) were occasionally reported, and slightly over a tenth (13,3%) were rarely reported and less than a tenth (6,7%) were not reported at all
- d). most (90%) of the cricket injuries had the impact of instilling fear and negatively affecting the players' enjoyment of the game
- e). less than half (40%) of the injuries sustained were fractures and dislocations, while strains or sprains contributed slightly over a quarter (26,7%), and cuts or bruises contributed a fifth (20%), and contusions slightly more than a tenth (13,3%)
- f). slightly over half of the injuries were minor (at 53,5%), while less than half (40%) were mild, with less than a tenth (6,7%) being severe
- g). the lower limbs were the locality/site of the greatest proportion of injuries sustained (40%), followed by the upper limbs at 33,3%, followed by the trunk or torso at 20%, with the head or face sustaining 6,7% of the injuries
- h). slightly over a third (40%) of the injuries necessitated medical treatment while more than half (60%) were treated locally
- i). the contributory factors to the injuries were reported to be inadequate safety and equipment by slightly less than half (46,7%) of the respondents and poor fields were cited by just over a third (33,3%) of the participants
- j). the cricket injuries incurred had the impact of decreased participation in other activities for about a third of the participants (33,3%), while slightly over a quarter experienced impaired academic performance and physical discomfort or pain after injury (both at 26,7%), and emotional or psychological effects were reported by slightly over a tenth (13,3%) of the respondents
- k). The majority of respondents (86,7%) confirmed the existence of support and resources to minimize injuries which most (93% deemed to be effective in reducing injury
- l). most of the respondents (93%) don't seem aware of the dangers associated with cricket-related injuries
- m). over half of the players (53,3%) are aware of the safety prevention measures available at their institutions, while nearly another half (46,7%) are not aware of such measures
- n). nearly a third (33,3%) of the respondents recommended that training and education related to injuries as a strategy to minimize injuries, while slightly over a quarter (26,7%) suggested improvement in safety and equipment and supervision of players while field maintenance was proposed by slightly over a tenth (13,3%) of the respondents.

We conclude that although cricket injuries in Zimbabwe primary schools are very prevalent, they are however very infrequent and minor in their severity, and are reported nearly half the times they occur, and have negative impacts of players. We further conclude that secondary school cricket injuries present mostly as fractures and dislocations and less so as strains, sprains and cuts, mostly in the lower limbs, followed by the upper body, and then the trunk and the face, with nearly half of them warranting medical treatment. Respondents cited inadequate safety measures as the major cause of injuries, followed by poor fields.

We recommend that more injury prevention measures be implemented, intensively, in secondary schools, especially for the lower limbs that are more susceptible to cricket injuries, that all injuries that occur be reported, that training be supervised more, and that cricket fields be spruced up for greater safety of players.

Further similar studies could investigate cricket injury patterns at elite levels of cricket play.

New Words: injury, cricket, limbs, susceptible.