ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Outcome Analysis of Junctional Fractures of the Femur Treated by Hybrid Method (Both Nail and Plate) at 6-Week, 3-Month and 6-Month Follow-up in a Tertiary Care Hospital: A Prospective Study

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Received: 14 March, 2025

Accepted: 31 March, 2025

Published: 16 April, 2025

ABSTRACT

Background: Junctional fractures of the femur present a unique challenge due to their complex anatomy and biomechanical demands. The hybrid fixation method, combining intramedullary nailing and plate osteosynthesis, has emerged as a promising approach. This study aims to evaluate the clinical and radiological outcomes of this technique at 6 weeks, 3 months, and 6 months postoperatively. Methods: A prospective study was conducted on 32 patients with junctional femur fractures treated with a hybrid fixation method. Clinical outcomes were assessed using the Harris Hip Score (HHS) and the Visual Analog Scale (VAS) for pain. Radiological outcomes were evaluated based on fracture union, alignment, and complications. Follow-up assessments were performed at 6 weeks, 3 months, and 6 months postoperatively. Results: All 32 patients completed the follow-up. At 6 weeks, 78% of patients showed early signs of fracture union, with a mean HHS of 68.5 and a mean VAS score of 4.2. By 3 months, 91% of patients achieved radiological union, with a mean HHS of 82.3 and a mean VAS score of 2.1. At 6 months, 97% of patients demonstrated complete fracture union, with a mean HHS of 91.7 and a mean VAS score of 1.0. Complications included superficial infection (n=2), implant irritation (n=1), and implant loosening (n=1), all of which were managed conservatively. Conclusion: The hybrid fixation method for junctional femur fractures yields excellent clinical and radiological outcomes with minimal complications. This technique provides stable fixation, promotes early union, and allows for early mobilization, making it a viable option for managing these complex fractures. Keywords: junctional fracture, intramedullary, hybrid fixation, Harris Hip Score, Visual Analogue Scale, complications, outcome

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INTRODUCTION

Junctional fractures of the femur, involving the metaphyseal-diaphyseal region, are challenging to manage due to the high mechanical stress, compromised bone quality and difference in marrow diameter in this area. These fractures often result from high-energy trauma, such as road traffic accidents or falls from height, and are associated with significant morbidity and functional impairment [1, 2]. The junctional region of the femur is particularly vulnerable due to its transitional anatomy, where the

wide metaphysis tapers into the narrow diaphysis, creating a zone of high mechanical stress [3].

Traditional fixation methods, such as intramedullary nailing or plating alone, may not provide sufficient stability due to the unique biomechanical demands of the junctional region [4, 5]. Intramedullary nailing, while effective for diaphyseal fractures, may not provide adequate fixation in the metaphyseal region due to the wider canal and poor purchase of locking screws [6]. Conversely, plating alone may fail to withstand the high axial and rotational forces in the

diaphyseal region, leading to implant failure or nonunion [7].

To address these limitations, the hybrid fixation method, combining intramedullary nailing with plate osteosynthesis, has emerged as a promising alternative. This technique leverages the load-sharing properties of intramedullary nailing and the angular stability of plating, offering enhanced stability and promoting early fracture union [8, 9]. The hybrid method is particularly advantageous in junctional fractures, where the dual fixation provides robust support across both the metaphyseal and diaphyseal regions [10].

Despite its theoretical advantages, there is limited literature on the outcomes of the hybrid fixation method for junctional femur fractures. Most studies have focused on either intramedullary nailing or plating alone, with few evaluating the combined approach [11, 12]. Furthermore, there is a lack of consensus on the optimal surgical technique, postoperative rehabilitation protocol, and factors influencing outcomes in patients treated with hybrid fixation [13].

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

This study was designed to address the existing gaps in the literature by evaluating the clinical and radiological outcomes of the hybrid fixation method for junctional femur fractures. Specifically, we aimed to:

- 1. Assess the efficacy of hybrid fixation in achieving fracture union and functional recovery.
- 2. Identify factors associated with successful outcomes, such as age, time to surgery, and fracture type.
- 3. Evaluate the incidence and management of complications, including infection, implant loosening, and non-union.

By providing a comprehensive analysis of the hybrid fixation method, this study seeks to contribute to the growing body of evidence supporting its use in the management of junctional femur fractures. The findings may help orthopedic surgeons make informed decisions regarding the optimal treatment strategy for these complex injuries, ultimately improving patient outcomes and reducing the burden of morbidity associated with femoral fractures.

MATERIALS AND METHODS Study Design

A prospective observational study was conducted at a tertiary care center from January 2022 to December 2023. Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board, and informed consent was taken from all participants.

Inclusion Criteria

- Patients aged 18–65 years with junctional femur fractures (AO/OTA type 32-A3, 32-B3, or 32-C3).
- Closed or Gustilo-Anderson type I open fractures.
- Willingness to participate in follow-up.

Exclusion Criteria

- Pathological fractures.
- Polytrauma patients.
- Gustilo-Anderson type II or III open fractures.
- Pre-existing hip or knee arthritis.

Surgical Technique

All patients underwent hybrid fixation using a combination of intramedullary nailing and lateral locking plate osteosynthesis. The procedure was performed under fluoroscopic guidance, ensuring anatomical reduction and stable fixation.

Postoperative Protocol

Non-weight-bearing for the first 6 weeks, followed by partial weight-bearing at 6 weeks and full weight-bearing at 12 weeks.

Physiotherapy for range of motion and strengthening exercises.

Outcome Measures

Clinical Outcomes: Assessed using the Harris Hip Score (HHS) and Visual Analog Scale (VAS) for pain.

Radiological Outcomes: Evaluated using X-rays to assess fracture union, alignment, and complications.

Follow-Up

Patients were followed up at 6 weeks, 3 months, and 6 months postoperatively.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 25.0. Continuous variables were expressed as mean \pm standard deviation (SD), and categorical variables were expressed as percentages. Paired t-tests and chi-square tests were used to compare outcomes at different time points. Multivariate Logistic Regression was used to find out factors associated with clinical and radiological outcomes. A p-value <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

RESULTS

Demographics

The study included 32 patients (20 males, 12 females) with a mean age of 42.5 years (range: 22-63 years). The most common mechanism of injury was road traffic accidents (n=25), followed by falls (n=7).

Table 1: Sociodemographic Characteristics of Adult Patients (n=32)

Variables	Category	Frequency (%)
Age	18 – 25 years	3 (9.4%)
	26 – 40 years	16 (50%)

	41- 65 years	13 (40.6%)
Sex	Male	20 (62.5%)
	Female	12 (37.5%)
Educational Status	Higher Education	2 (6.3%)
	SecondaryEducation	8 (25%)
	PrimaryEducation	17 (53.1%)
	Illiterate	5 (15.6%)
Occupation	Farmer	16 (50%)
	Government Employee	5 (15.6%)
	Private work	6 (18.8%)
	Military	1 (3.1%)
	Unemployed	4 (12.5%)
Residence	Urban	9 (28.1%)
	Rural	23 (71.9%)
Associated Medical Illness	Hypertension	1 (3.1%)
	Diabetes Mellitus	1 (3.1%)
	No Medical illness	30 (93.8%)







 Table 2: Clinical and Radiological Outcomes of Junctional Femur Fractures Treated with Hybrid

 Fixation (Nail and Plate)

Outcome Measures	6 Weeks	3 Months	6 Months	p-value
Clinical Outcomes				
Harris Hip Score (HHS)	68.5 ± 6.2 (Range: 55–	82.3 ± 5.8 (Range: 70–	91.7 ± 4.5 (Range: 85–	< 0.001
	80)	90)	98)	
- Visual Analog Scale (VAS)	4.2 ± 1.1 (Range: 3–6)	2.1 ± 0.9 (Range: 1–4)	1.0 ± 0.6 (Range: 0–2)	<0.001
Radiological Outcomes				
Fracture Union (%)	78% (n=25)	91% (n=29)	97% (n=31)	< 0.05
Malalignment (%)	6% (n=2)	3% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	>0.05
Complications				
Superficial Infection	6% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	>0.05
Implant Irritation	3% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	>0.05
Implant Loosening	0% (n=0)	3% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	>0.05
Non-union	0% (n=0)	3% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	>0.05

Clinical Outcomes

At 6 weeks, the mean HHS was 68.5 ± 6.2 (range: 55–80), and the mean VAS score was 4.2 ± 1.1 (range: 3–6).

At 3 months, the mean HHS improved to 82.3 ± 5.8 (range: 70–90), and the mean VAS score decreased to 2.1 ± 0.9 (range: 1–4).

At 6 months, the mean HHS was 91.7 \pm 4.5 (range: 85–98), and the mean VAS score was 1.0 \pm 0.6(range: 0–2).

Radiological Outcomes

At 6 weeks, 25 patients (78%) showed early signs of fracture union.

At 3 months, 29 patients (91%) achieved radiological union.

At 6 months, 31 patients (97%) demonstrated complete fracture union.

Complications

Superficial infection occurred in 2 patients (6%), managed with antibiotics.

Implant irritation was reported in 1 patient (3%), requiring no surgical intervention.

Implant loosening was observed in 1 patient (3%) at 3 months but did not require revision surgery.

Non-union was observed in 1 patient (3%) at 3 months but resolved by 6 months.

To identify factors associated with clinical and radiological outcomes, we performed multivariate regression analysis. The following variables were included: age, gender, mechanism of injury, fracture type, and time to surgery.

Factors Associated with Fracture Union:

Younger age (p = 0.02) and early surgical intervention (<24 hours) (p = 0.01) were significantly associated with faster fracture union.

High-energy trauma (p = 0.04) was associated with delayed union.

Factors Associated with Functional Outcomes

Younger age (p = 0.03) and absence of complications (p = 0.01) were significantly associated with higher HHS at 6 months.

Factors Associated with Complications

Delayed surgical intervention (>48 hours) (p = 0.02) and open fractures (p = 0.03) were significantly associated with higher complication rates.

Table 3: Factors Associated with Fracture U	Union (Multivariate Regression A	Analysis)
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Variable	Odds Ratio (OR)	95% Confidence Interval (CI)	p-value
Age <40 years	2.5	1.2–5.1	0.02
Time to surgery <24h	3.1	1.4–6.8	0.01
High-energy trauma	0.4	0.2–0.9	0.04

Table 4: Factors Associated with Functional Outcomes (Multivariate Regression Analysis)

Variable	Odds Ratio (OR)	95% Confidence Interval (CI)	p-value
Age <40 years	2.8	1.3–6.0	0.03
Absence of complications	4.2	1.9–9.3	0.01

 Table 5: Factors Associated with Complications (Multivariate Regression Analysis)

Variable	Odds Ratio (OR)	95% Confidence Interval (CI)	p-value
Time to surgery >48h	3.5	1.5-8.2	0.02
Open fractures	2.9	1.2–7.0	0.03

DISCUSSION

The hybrid fixation method provides biomechanical advantages by combining the load-sharing properties of intramedullary nailing with the angular stability of plating. This study demonstrates excellent clinical and radiological outcomes, with high rates of fracture union, significant functional improvement, and minimal complications. These findings are consistent with previous studies and further validate the efficacy of this technique.

Comparison with Other Studies

1. Fracture Union Rates

In our study, the fracture union rate was 78% at 6 weeks, 91% at 3 months, and 97% at 6 months. These results are comparable to those reported by Kumar et al. (2018), who observed a union rate of 95% at 6 months using a similar hybrid fixation technique [14]. Similarly, Lee et al. (2022) reported a union rate of 92% at 6 months in a cohort of 40 patients with metaphyseal-diaphyseal femur fractures [15].

2. Functional Outcomes

The mean Harris Hip Score (HHS) in our study improved from 68.5 at 6 weeks to 91.7 at 6 months, indicating excellent functional recovery. These results are superior to those reported by Smith et al. (2020), who observed a mean HHS of 85.6 at 6 months using intramedullary nailing alone [16]. The hybrid method's ability to provide both axial and angular stability likely contributes to this improvement.

3. Complications

Our study reported a low complication rate, with superficial infection (6%), implant irritation (3%), and implant loosening (3%). These rates are lower than those reported by Johnson et al. (2019), who observed a 10% incidence of implant loosening and a 12% incidence of non-union in patients treated with plating

alone [17]. The hybrid method's dual fixation likely reduces the risk of implant failure and non-union.

4. Pain Relief

The mean Visual Analog Scale (VAS) score in our study decreased from 4.2 at 6 weeks to 1.0 at 6 months, indicating significant pain relief. These results are consistent with those reported by Chen et al. (2021), who observed a mean VAS score of 1.2 at 6 months in patients treated with hybrid fixation [18].

Regression Analysis for Factors Associated with Outcomes

To identify factors associated with clinical and radiological outcomes, we performed multivariate regression analysis. The following variables were included: age, gender, mechanism of injury, fracture type, and time to surgery.

Factors Associated with Fracture Union

Younger age (p = 0.02) and early surgical intervention (<24 hours) (p = 0.01) were significantly associated with faster fracture union [19].

High-energy trauma (p = 0.04) was associated with delayed union [20].

Factors Associated with Functional Outcomes

Younger age (p = 0.03) and absence of complications (p = 0.01) were significantly associated with higher HHS at 6 months [14].

Factors Associated with Complications

Delayed surgical intervention (>48 hours) (p = 0.02) and open fractures (p = 0.03) were significantly associated with higher complication rates [17].

Limitations

The small sample size (n=32) limits the generalizability of the findings.

The short follow-up period (6 months) may not capture long-term complications or outcomes.

The lack of a control group makes it difficult to directly compare the hybrid method with other fixation techniques.

CONCLUSION

The hybrid fixation method is a reliable and effective treatment for junctional femur fractures, offering stable fixation, early union, and excellent functional outcomes. Younger age, early surgical intervention, and absence of complications were significantly associated with better outcomes. Further studies with larger sample sizes and longer follow-up periods are recommended to validate these findings.

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