IMPACT OF VOCAL HYGIENE ON SELF RATED VOCAL HEALTH OF TEACHERS OF PAKISTAN
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Abstract
Background: The most common problem which hinders teaching occupation is related to the voice of teachers. Voice problems have great effect on professional functioning. While a teacher is unable to deliver lecture due to certain voice problem, process of imparting knowledge stops. Voice disorders are common in teachers due to lack of awareness about vocal hygiene, voice overloading, unfavorable working environment and work related stress3.

Objectives: The objective of this study is to determine the effects of vocal hygiene on self rated vocal health of the teachers.

Methodology: A cross sectional study was conducted and 110 teachers from different schools and colleges were recruited through convenient sampling. Structured questionnaire and a self rating scale for voice disorders were used to gather data which was analyzed through SPSS version 16.0.

Results: Results of this study reveal that 60 of the respondents reported to have voice problems and were not employing vocal hygiene protocol in their teaching practice 4 were not sure to have any problem and 46 rated them as having no voice problem.

Conclusion: On the basis of the results it is concluded that the teachers who rated their voice to have mild, moderate and severe problem over the last three weeks were not employing vocal hygiene protocol in their daily routine.

Keywords: Vocal Hygiene (VH), Vocal health, Voice problem.

Introduction
Voice of a teacher is an asset not only for a student but also for a teacher. The process of learning in the world revolves around this asset. The teacher’s voice does not only impart knowledge but also a living of a teacher is dependent upon this voice. If this voice is undergoing some problem, the teacher may not be able to develop working relationships with his students as well as his colleagues. Voice therapy and management, absenteeism and surgical intervention can result from this problem. In severe cases a teacher may have to quit their profession3.

Various studies conducted around world show that there is high prevalence of voice disorders among those who are in teaching profession. Filho M et.al reported 9.5%4 and Urrutikoetxea A et.al reported 13%5 of voice disorders among teachers in Portugal in 1995. Another study reported 63% of voice problems among teachers, conducted by Gotass et.al through self-rated vocal problem6.

Voice problems are not life threatening though yet they hinder the occupational activities of the teaching professionals. The International classification of functioning (ICF) Model by World health organization (WHO) can be best employed to explain the voice problems interfering the teaching profession. A vocal disorder impairs the structure of vocal cords which limits the function of producing voice appropriately thus disabling the process of delivering lectures and ultimate consequence will be economical and professional7.

The aim of this study was to figure out the effects of vocal hygiene on the voice of the teachers and to highlight the importance of vocal hygiene which can be employed to lower down frequency of voice problems which then leads to any sort of interventions, therapies and reducing absenteeism from work.

Materials and methods
A cross sectional study was conducted in different educational institutions of Pakistan. A convenient sampling method was used and 110 respondents both male and female teachers from schools and colleges both from public and private sector were recruited. Teachers with minimum six years of teaching experience were employed. Data
was collected through structured questionnaire comprised of twenty eight questions. A self rating scale for voice disorders were used in the end. Data collected was then analyzed on SPSS 10.

**Results**

Respondents who are taking less than five glass per day rated them to have voice problems as follows.

![Figure 1: Intake of water less than 5 glasses per day](image)

13% rated themselves to have no voice problem, 15% rated to have mild voice problem, 2% have moderate voice problem and 1% rated to have severe voice problems.

![Figure 2: Intake of caffeinated drink is more than 5 cups P....](image)

Respondents who are taking more than five cups of caffeinated drink, 6% rated themselves as having no voice problem, 7% said that they have mild voice problem, 2% have moderate voice problem and 1% have severe voice problem.
27% of the respondents reported that they have no voice problem due to dust in their environment. 37% reported to have mild, 11% moderate and 2% had severe voice problem.

15% of the respondents reported they frequently clear their throats but have no voice problem, 27% have mild, 9% moderate, 1% have severe voice problem.
Discussion

This study showed that the teachers who employ vocal hygiene protocol in their routine complaint of voice problems less than those who do not follow the protocol. Various studies conducted in 1994 and 1998 around world about giving vocal hygiene training to teachers also reveal that the teachers who were given vocal hygiene training for six weeks reported to have less voice problems as compared to other control groups who did not follow any vocal hygiene protocol either or adopted some other interventional techniques$^8,9,10$. Education of vocal hygiene training given to teachers is considered to be the base line among preventive measures. This method is more cost effective than other treatments to cure voice problems once occurred$^11$. It is therefore suggested by many voice clinicians that education about vocal hygiene should be the part of teachers training programme so that the teachers may take care of their voices by employing simple but effective strategies and improve their performance.

Conclusion

The current study has established the fact that teachers who take more water before after and during lectures and their caffeinated intake is less than that recommended by America Speech & hearing association ASHA are more prone to develop speech disorders. Similarly those teachers who frequently clear their throats and work in dusty environments for longer durations may also develop with voice problems. It is therefore recommended that teachers should take plenty of water and avoid taking more than five cups of tea of coffee per day. They should quit their habit of clearing throats frequently and those working in dusty environments may use masks in non teaching hours. The above mentioned strategies are vocal hygiene protocols about which teachers should be well aware.

References

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