
Transgender: An Ignored Population At Risk Of Hyperfunctional Voice Disorders

Abstract

INTRODUCTION: - Voice is the most salient feature of an individual and it is a major sign of sexuality, when we communicate with each other, we use different pitch, intonation, loudness to express our messages or information. Every individual have their own voice quality that differs them and it depends on sex and gender, quality refers to the character or distinctive attributes of a sound. Many people who have normal speaking skills have great difficulty communicating when their vocal apparatus fails. As we know, women have high pitch of voice compared to male who have low pitch, so voice is an essential marker to differentiate between male and female. Many researches have already been done on different vocal profiles of male and females, but there is special population, which is out of focus, i. e. transgenders. Transgender, what is the term depicts? Transgender is a large term used to describe people who express their gender in such a way that differs from social norms. In general, transgender people experience discomfort or inadequacy with their body, masculine or feminine voice quality.

According to the ASHA code of ethics (2010) "individual shall not discriminate in the delivery of professional services on the basis of race or ethnicity, gender, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or disability. In past literature only limited handful studies are available on the voice characteristics of transgender revealing that transgender are at high risk of voice disorder due to the style of speaking they used. Thus, they need speech therapy to enhance perception as their true gender. But the most challenging part that come is their secretive and shy nature that they do not want to reveal themselves and unaware from the fact that their voice can be modified according to their needs. As an SLP it's our duty to make them assure and aware about the possible management to improve their voice quality.

AIM: To formulate the acoustical and perceptual vocal profile of transgenders and make them aware about vocal health and hygiene.

NEED OF THE STUDY: In past literature limited studies are present discussing about voice of transgender. Only some studies try to attempt to form a vocal profile of transgender but they had included limited number of population so to form reliable vocal profile of transgender there is a need to study vocal characteristics of transgender. This will further also help voice pathologists to provide better and flexible communication for individuals who born with an already adaptive voice quality.

Method: - participants

A total of 60 transgender of age group from 15-45yrs with mean age of 24. 35 years were participated in the present study. Individuals suffering from any kind of neurological and any health issues were excluded from the study. Instrument and tool used: Acoustic analysis was made by Praat software, perceptual analysis was done using Buffalo III voice screening profile and aerodynamic measure was assessed using Maximum Phonation Time (MPT) & s/z ratio. To

assess the effect of vocal impairment on quality of life, VRQOL (voice related quality of life) was used which consists of 10 questions was administered.

Procedure

Before conducting the data aim and objective of study was explained to the participants and informed consent was taken. A complete case history, emotional status, maximum phonation duration and s/z ratio was taken from each participants. All subjects were asked to phonate /a/ sound for the acoustic and perceptual analysis of voice. At last VRQOL was given to subjects and asked to fill the questionnaire. If subjects faced any issue while collecting sample than explanation was made. At last vocal health & hygiene awareness program was given to all subjects.

Result & discussion

Present study revealed that on acoustic analysis significant difference was found for HNR. Majority of population had very low pitch voice. Further analysis also revealed that 6 subjects had lump in a throat feeling, 2 had diplophonic voice and most of had hoarse voice quality. Our result also indicates that most of the transgender feel anxious, frustrated and depressed because of their voice. They face trouble during having a telephonic conversation, most of the time they used to skip the situation.

Summary & conclusion

Present study was conducted on transgender to formulate the vocal characteristics. Study revealed that most of the population is indulge in the voice demanding occupation, they also try to manipulate their voice to make their voice more beautiful but in doing same they may lead to hyperadduction of vocal folds which may lead to hyperfunctional voice disorders. Present study need to be further extends to make them aware about the vocal health and hygiene to reduce the risk of hyperfunctional voice disorder.