

PREVALENCE OF VOICE DISORDERS AMONG TEACHERS AT THE BEGINNING OF THEIR CAREER

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Due to the high vocal demands associated with their profession, teachers face an increased risk of developing voice disorders. Research suggests that up to 50 % of experienced teachers are affected. Even student teachers, whose vocal load is still relatively low, report voice problems with a frequency of 20 % (Simberg, Laine, Sala, & Rönnemaa, 2000). Little is known about the prevalence of voice disorders among teachers at the very beginning of their career. In Germany, teachers must complete a two-year teaching practice as part of their professional training after they graduate from university, consisting of attending specialized courses and giving lessons. The aim of this symptom-based study was to determine the prevalence of voice problems among this population. A self-administered questionnaire was answered by 73 German teachers in teaching practice. The prevalence of a voice problem was defined based on the presence of two symptoms that persisted for a minimum of two weeks. Results revealed that 37 % of teachers had voice problems during their teaching practice. Among the most frequent symptoms were *hoarseness*, *an urge to clear one's throat* and *problems speaking at a loud voice*. Considering that the participants had not even begun teaching full-time, the prevalence of reported voice problems is worrisome. It could be associated with their lacking experience in how to use their voice effectively. The findings highlight the necessity of early intervention programs focusing on vocal hygiene and effective voice use in classroom situations.