



Prevalence of Upper Limb Musculoskeletal Risk and Discomfort among Content Creators

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ABSTRACT:

Background: Content creation, especially vlogging, has quickly grown with the rise of digital platforms. This growth requires long hours of using cameras, smartphones, and editing tools. These tasks often involve repetitive movements of the arms, constant gripping, and awkward positions while filming and editing. Over time, this strain on the body can cause muscle fatigue, discomfort, and decreased efficiency in the use of the arms. Limited knowledge about proper ergonomics and long hours in front of screens make the strain on the shoulders, elbows, and wrists worse. As a result, content creators may face a higher risk of developing problems with their upper limb muscles and joints.

Aim:To assess the prevalence of upper limb musculoskeletal risk and the discomfort among content creators using the self-structured questionnaire.

Materials and Methods: This study was conducted by the department of Physiotherapy, D Y Patil deemed to be University, Nerul, Navi Mumbai. A self-designed self-report questionnaire included questions about vlogger-perceived dominance, working hours, average editing times, ergonomic conditions, and pain and discomfort due to camera handling, long editing hours, and maintaining certain body postures. The questionnaire was distributed in a YouTube forum that was shared by the vloggers. Participants were recruited according to inclusion and exclusion criteria. After being informed of the study, the participants consented to using a self-administered survey. Data were entered into a Microsoft Excel database, and the values were analysed to determine the relationship between musculoskeletal risk and the level of discomfort.

Results:The study included participants aged 18-55 years, with 57.1% (n=40) male and 42.9% (n=30) female content creators. Among the 70 participants, 60 reported experiencing upper limb pain related to content creating which involves video recording and editing, while 10 reported no pain. Of those with pain, 13 participants had mild discomfort and 23 reported moderate pain. Notably, 24 participants experienced severe pain that impacted their activities of daily living (ADL). These findings indicate a high prevalence and considerable severity of upper limb discomfort among content creators.

Conclusion:This study sheds light on a growing concern that often goes unnoticed, the physical toll that content creation takes on vloggers. As vlogging continues to grow as a profession and lifestyle among people, their physical well-being deserves just as much attention as their creative output.

Introduction

The current generation of vloggers not only creates videos as a hobby but actually makes it a full-time profession. With social media sites like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, the modern person uses the camera not just to make videos as a means of expression

or entertainment but also a full-time profession. However, among all the technical aspects of vlogging, one aspect that is often overlooked is how strenuous making content can be to the human body¹.

The vloggers have to endure several hours of holding the camera, typing down scripts, editing videos, and



continuously dealing with technological equipment. These repeated activities, in addition to improper posture or an ergonomic workspace, might result in some form of pain. In many cases, vloggers suffer from wrist, shoulder, elbow, and neck pains^{2,3}.

Upper extremity musculoskeletal disorders represent one of the most common occupational health problems today. These conditions can develop through a combination of repetitive movements of the muscles and joints, awkward or uncomfortable postures, and exposure to static postures that cause strain on muscles, tendons, and joints. Symptoms typically start with feelings of pain, stiffness, numbness, or limited mobility in the neck, shoulder, upper arm, and wrist or hand, and may even progress to long-term musculoskeletal disorders with serious effects on an individual's health and workplace productivity. Early symptoms, however, are often treatable with timely ergonomics intervention and prevention programs^{4,5}.

Even though the work of vloggers is still relatively recent and rapidly growing, the unique combination of risk factors associated with this type of work could be greater than for other professions. Carrying around cameras or stabilizers for long periods of time is not so dissimilar to that of a cameraman, long hours spent on a computer editing and producing is comparable to an editor or digital producer and often unpredictable settings in which to work which may not support ergonomics. Recognising the potential risks to the upper-limb and associated musculoskeletal conditions could be a currently under-recognised aspect of this type of work, as well as the potential for vloggers to be at increased risk of developing a range of chronic health problems due to the high demands required to produce content and engage with their audience^{6,7}.

Vlogging has become an acknowledged profession and a thriving form of media that brings countless numbers of individuals around the world to create vlogs for millions of viewers. As a phenomenon with millions actively engaging in it, the growth of the vlogging community naturally raises questions about the vlogger's health. Since many viewers and researchers view vloggers as having an "easy job," with work consisting primarily of editing on a computer and putting up videos, there is a growing health concern in the vlogging community that no one is aware of. This concern has to do with the lack of physical health awareness specifically within the profession of vlogging.

There is a cultural component that predisposes the creators to downplay discomfort. The pressure of consistency, engagement and the production rhythm are among the few aspects that often cause them to ignore early signals of potential issues. By the time they feel symptoms interfering with their normal functioning, it is already too late. This is especially concerning when upper limbs are the main workers in their profession, constantly handling the camera, additional equipment, dealing with computers' keyboard and interacting with editing software by performing repetitive gestures.

Although musculoskeletal discomfort and upper-limb disorders are seemingly common problems faced by vloggers, a lack of research currently exists on the topic. It is essential to the development of ergonomic solutions and health interventions into the creation of digital content that this phenomenon is explored in depth. Future studies need to identify how discomfort occurs and progresses in order to establish the basis for the development of effective ergonomic solutions and health awareness strategies for vloggers⁹.

This study investigates the relationship between reported discomfort and upper-limb musculoskeletal disorders in vloggers and aims to develop a foundation for promoting healthy behaviour amongst this ever-expanding creator community. As the online world of digital storytelling continues to grow and evolve at breakneck speed, it is increasingly important that we be aware of the potential health effects on creators and begin to work towards fostering a culture that encourages sustainable health environment⁸.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design and Setting

This prospective cohort study was conducted by the Department of Physiotherapy, D Y Patil University, Navi Mumbai, India. The study was conducted over a period of six months after approval from the Institutional Ethics Committee (IEC). A self-designed, self-reported questionnaire was created to assess the Vloggers' dominance, working habits, editing duration, vlogging activities and the ergonomic factors associated with it. The self-reported questionnaire was further designed to find out any pain or discomfort symptoms that they experienced due to their vlogging activities such as handling of the camera, editing and any other activity that they were involved in as a vlogger. The questionnaire was posted on a common shared YouTube forum for vloggers that is part of the larger study on vloggers.



Study Population

Vloggers who were willing to participate in the study were approached and included in the study after applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The participants were made aware of the study objectives and they were provided with a consent form in their own language. Participants had the option to clarify any doubts they had regarding the study from the primary investigator prior to the consent.

Sample Size

A total of 70 vloggers were included in the study.

Inclusion Criteria

1. People who do vlogging and editing for 4 hours a week.
2. People who are co-operative and give consent for the study.

Exclusion Criteria

1. People with any co-morbid factors or significant medical history
2. Recent surgeries of upper limb within 6 months.

Data Collection

The information obtained by circulating the Google form, data from which was then entered into the MS Excel worksheet for further analysis Statistical Analysis.

Data analysis

The product-moment correlation coefficient developed by Karl Pearson was calculated to explore the relationship between the type of vlogging equipment and the frequency of the occurrence of upper limb discomfort among the content creators. Data was analyzed using SPSS Software.

Results

Table 1 – Distribution of Vloggers as per their age.

Age Groups	Count	Percentage Of Vloggers
18-25	35	50%
25-35	30	42.9%

35-45	3	4.3%
45-55	2	2.9%

Table 2 - Years of vlogging experience of the subjects

Years Of Exp.	No. Of Vloggers
Less Than 1 Year	17
1 - 3 Years	18
3-5 Years	19
More Than 5 Years	16

Table 3 -Distribution of vloggers according to the gender

Genders	Percentage Of Vloggers
Male	57.1%
Female	42.9%

Table 4 - Dominant hand distribution

Dominant Hand	Count	Percentage
Right	50	71.4%
Left	20	28.6%

Table 5 - Distribution of daily screen time utilized for vlogging related activities (filming + editing) in a day.

No. Of Hours	No. Of Vloggers
Less Than 2 Hours	20
2 - 4 Hours	17
4 - 6 Hours	16
More Than 6 Hours	17



Table 6 - Distribution of devices used for vlogging

Type Of Setup Used	Count
Professional Camera With Tripod	20
Dslr Handheld	15
Phone With Tripod	15
Webcam/Laptop	11
Phone Handheld	9

Table 7 - Distribution of hours of vlogging

Hours of vlogs in a week	Hours of Filming	Hours of Editing
Less than 6 hours/week	5	16
6-12 hours/week	19	41
12-18 hours/week	26	11
18-24 hours/week	11	1
More than 24 hours/week	9	1

Figure1 –Pain in Upper limb while vlogging

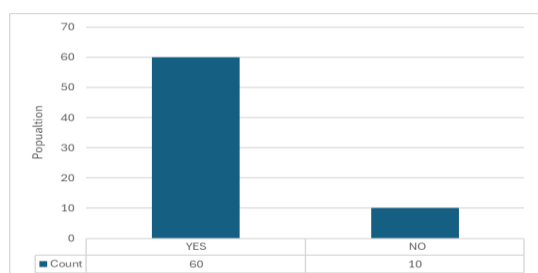


Figure 2 - Distribution of pain while holding camera for extended periods

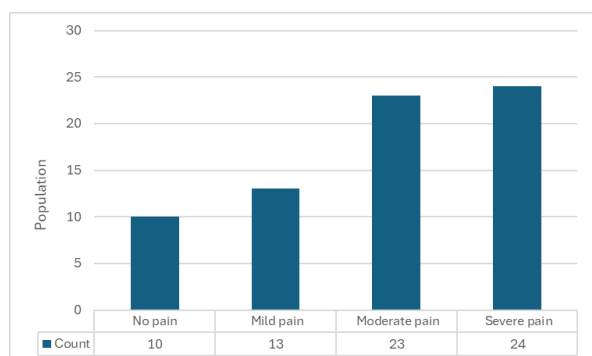


Figure 3 - Distribution of discomfort in wrist after editing or filming

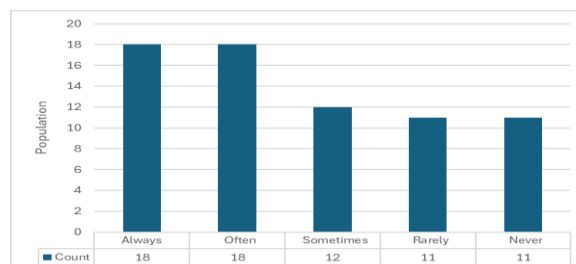


Figure 4 -Distribution of tension in the shoulders while vlogging or editing

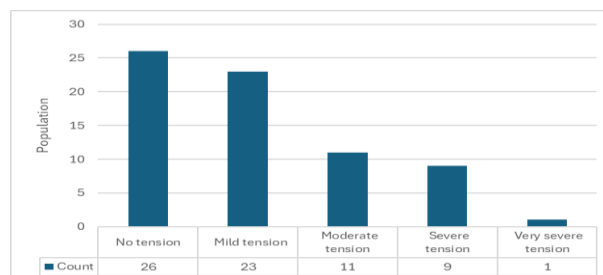


Figure 5 - Distribution of stiffness/soreness in forearms during or after work

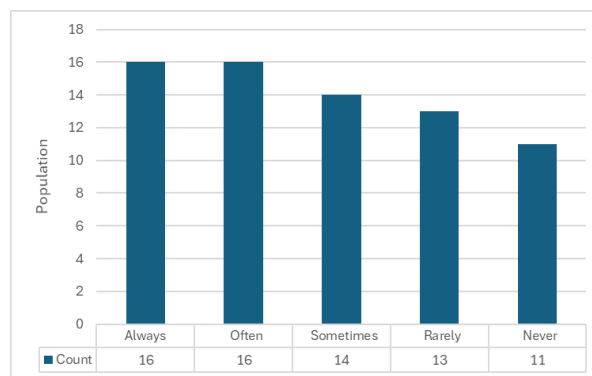


Figure 6 - Distribution of numbness/tingling in fingers while working

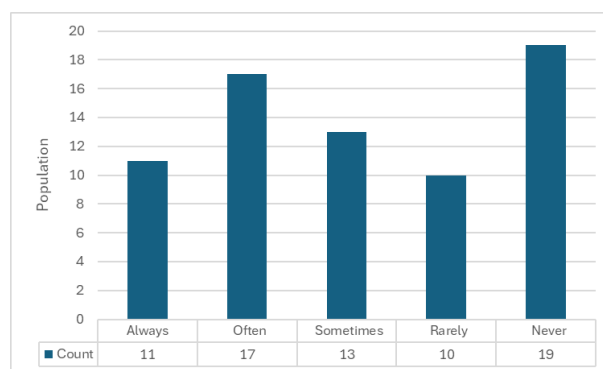




Figure 7 - Distribution of workstation setup usage for editing

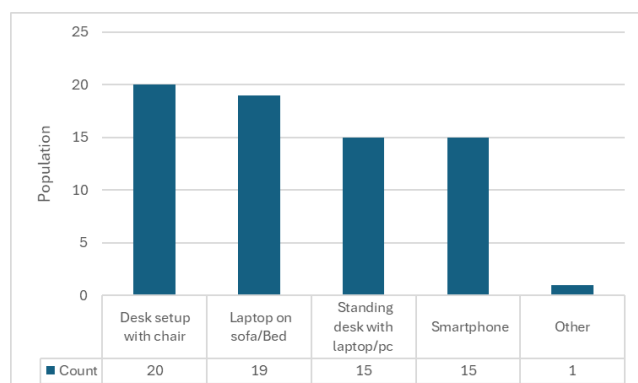


Figure 8 - Vlogging/editing posture contributing to your physical discomfort

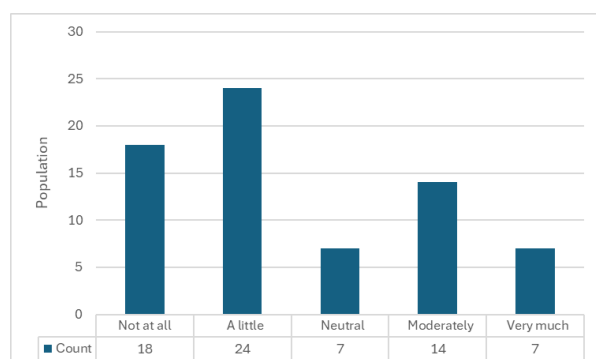
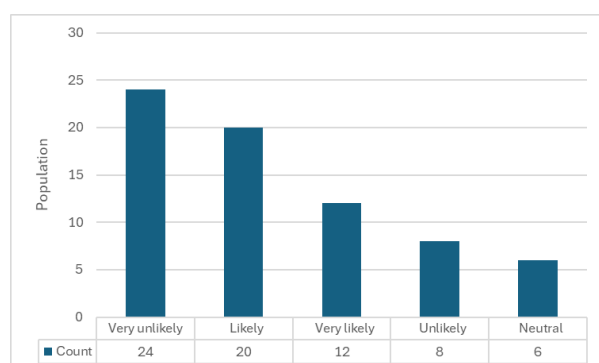


Figure 9 - Distribution of subjects performing stretching/exercises to relieve upper body tension



Discussion

This study set out to explore an occupational health concern that has been quietly growing alongside the vlogging industry itself. The prevalence and severity of upper limb musculoskeletal discomfort among content

creators. The findings, drawn from 70 vloggers across a wide age range, paint a picture that is both telling and, in some ways, unsurprising. Of the total participants, 85.7% reported experiencing upper limb pain directly attributable to their vlogging activities, with 34.3% describing that pain as severe enough to interfere with their activities of daily living. These numbers alone make a compelling case for why this population deserves focused occupational health attention.

The demographic profile of participants offered meaningful context for interpreting these findings. The majority of participants fell within the 18–35 age bracket, with 50% aged between 18 and 25 and an additional 42.9% between 25 and 35. This concentration in younger age groups reflects the broader demographic reality of the vlogging profession, where platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok have attracted younger generations as their primary content producers. Interestingly, the fact that musculoskeletal discomfort was so prevalent in this relatively young cohort suggests that the problem is less about age-related degeneration and more about the cumulative effect of occupational exposure a pattern consistent with what has been observed in other professions involving repetitive upper limb use, such as computer work and camera operation.

A study by Kim et al. on male cameramen documented a high prevalence of work-related upper extremity musculoskeletal disorders, attributing them primarily to the sustained load of carrying and operating camera equipment over extended periods. The physical demands described in that population bear a notable resemblance to what vloggers in this study reported. Specifically, participants who used handheld equipment whether a DSLR camera (21.4%) or a handheld phone (12.9%) were likely subjected to prolonged static loading of the shoulder, elbow, and wrist joints without the stabilizing support of a tripod or fixed mount. The 28.6% who used a professional camera with a tripod may have experienced slightly different loading patterns, but they were by no means exempt from discomfort, particularly during setup, repositioning, and extended filming sessions.

The data on weekly filming and editing hours reinforced the occupational intensity of vlogging. A substantial proportion of participants spent between 12 and 18 hours per week filming 37.1% while 58.6% of participants reported editing between 6 and 12 hours per week. Editing, in particular, demands prolonged periods of static posture at a workstation, repetitive fine motor movements of the fingers and wrist, and sustained



engagement of the forearm musculature, all recognized risk factors for cumulative trauma disorders of the upper extremity. This aligns with findings reported by Wærsted et al., who demonstrated in a systematic review that computer work involving sustained low-level muscle activity of the neck and upper extremities was significantly associated with musculoskeletal pain in those regions. In the context of vloggers, editing essentially functions as their equivalent of sedentary computer work, often carried out without meaningful ergonomic guidance or structured rest intervals.

Shoulder tension was among the most commonly reported symptoms, which is consistent with the physical requirements of the role. Holding a camera at arm's length, adjusting angles during filming, and sustaining awkward postures while recording in uncontrolled environments all place demand on the shoulder girdle musculature. Vasanthi et al., in their cross-sectional survey of cameramen in Malaysia, similarly found the shoulder to be among the most frequently affected anatomical regions, particularly among those who worked without postural support. The parallel between that population and the vloggers in the present study is difficult to ignore, especially given that many vloggers lack even the basic training in body mechanics that professional cameramen might receive.

Wrist discomfort following editing or filming sessions was another prominent finding in this study, and its prevalence adds weight to the cumulative trauma argument. The wrist is particularly vulnerable to overuse injury when subjected to repetitive flexion-extension movements, forceful gripping, and prolonged keyboard or touchpad use, all of which are routine in video editing workflows. Novak, in a clinical treatment review of upper extremity work-related musculoskeletal disorders, highlighted that conditions such as carpal tunnel syndrome, De Quervain's tenosynovitis, and lateral epicondylitis frequently arise in workers whose daily tasks mirror the demands described above. While the present study did not use clinical diagnostic criteria to identify specific pathological entities, the symptomatic patterns reported by vloggers are consistent with what would be expected in those conditions.

The distribution of handedness in the sample 71.4% right-hand dominant has implications for understanding the laterality of musculoskeletal risk in this population. In occupations involving asymmetric upper limb loading, the dominant hand typically bears a disproportionate share of fine motor and grip-related

tasks, including mouse usage during editing and camera trigger operation during filming. This may partly explain why localized discomfort in the wrist and forearm was so consistently reported, as the dominant limb would be more susceptible to overuse pathology under sustained demand. Roman-Liu et al. have shown in comparative studies of repetitive task workstations that the assessment of upper limb load must account for task asymmetry, as unilateral strain patterns tend to accelerate the onset of musculoskeletal complaints.

Forearm stiffness and soreness during or after sessions were reported by a meaningful proportion of participants, and this symptom pattern is particularly significant when considered alongside the editing hours data. Prolonged static activation of the forearm flexors and extensors, the kind that occurs during sustained mouse use and keyboard work is associated with the development of muscle fatigue and reduced tissue perfusion, which if left unaddressed, can progress to chronic tendinopathy or myofascial pain. Pawaskar et al., in their recent assessment of musculoskeletal disorders in video editors, documented similar patterns of forearm and wrist complaints in that population, reinforcing the idea that the editing phase of content creation carries its own distinct musculoskeletal burden, separate from but compounding the strain of filming.

Numbness and tingling in the fingers, although less universally reported than pain and tension, deserve particular clinical attention when they do occur. These neurological symptoms can indicate compression neuropathies such as carpal tunnel syndrome or cubital tunnel syndrome, conditions that may arise from sustained awkward wrist positions or prolonged elbow flexion both of which are plausible in the postures associated with handheld filming and extended editing sessions. Fine et al. have emphasized in their foundational work on cumulative trauma disorder detection that peripheral neurological symptoms like tingling and numbness are often early indicators of more serious pathological progression and should not be dismissed as transient or insignificant. The fact that some vloggers in this study were already experiencing such symptoms suggests that for a subset of the population, musculoskeletal risk may already be progressing beyond the stage of simple muscular discomfort.

The role of ergonomic posture and workstation setup in shaping these outcomes warrants serious consideration. The present study gathered data on whether participants used structured workstation arrangements for editing,



and the responses revealed that a substantial number did not consistently employ ergonomic setups. This observation aligns with the broader literature on digital workers and office-based professionals. Putsa et al., in a large cross-sectional study of office workers conducted over several years, identified ergonomic workstation configuration as one of the most modifiable factors associated with reduced musculoskeletal risk. Vloggers, however, face a unique challenge in this respect: their work environment is frequently informal, mobile, and self-managed, meaning they rarely have access to the kind of structured ergonomic guidance that office workers might receive. The consequences of this gap appear clearly in the data.

Vlogging as a profession places enormous emphasis on consistency of output, audience retention, and the maintenance of an engaged viewer base. These professional pressures create an environment in which creators may feel compelled to continue working through discomfort rather than rest or seek intervention. This tendency to dismiss early warning signals has been noted in other creative and digital industries, and it is especially concerning in a population whose physical demands have not been formally recognized or accommodated. The study by Martinez-Aguirre et al., which examined pathological processes among social media content creators through a scoping review, similarly flagged the absence of occupational health frameworks as a structural gap that leaves creators ill-equipped to recognize and respond to their own physical risk. This study's findings contribute to a growing body of evidence that such frameworks are not only warranted but urgently needed.

Participation in stretching or upper body exercises as a preventive measure was another variable assessed in this study. The responses to this question will be informative in understanding whether vloggers who engaged in regular physical maintenance reported lower levels of discomfort than those who did not. While detailed subgroup analysis on this variable is beyond the scope of this initial report, the question itself underscores a key message: that there are modifiable behavioural factors within the vlogger's own control that may meaningfully reduce musculoskeletal risk. Physiotherapy-led intervention programs, particularly those that incorporate upper limb strengthening, postural re-education, and task-specific ergonomic training, have demonstrated efficacy in comparable digital worker populations and represent a logical next step for applied research in this community.

Limitation

The sample was recruited through a YouTube forum, which, while practically accessible, introduces a selection bias in that participants were self-selected and may not be representative of the broader vlogging population. The reliance on self-reported data means that symptom severity and occupational exposure are subject to individual interpretation and recall bias. Additionally, the absence of clinical diagnostic criteria means that the musculoskeletal complaints documented here remain at the level of self-perceived discomfort rather than verified pathological conditions. Future studies would benefit from incorporating objective clinical assessments, physical ergonomic evaluations, and potentially longitudinal designs that can track the progression of discomfort into diagnosable musculoskeletal disorders over time. Expanding the sample size and geographic diversity of participants would also strengthen the generalizability of findings.

Conclusion

This study makes a meaningful contribution to an area of occupational health that has been largely overlooked. Vloggers are not a niche population they are a rapidly expanding workforce whose professional activities carry genuine physical health risks. The high prevalence of upper limb discomfort documented here, the severity distribution that extends to functional impairment, and the consistency of these findings with comparable occupational groups all underscore the need for targeted ergonomic guidance, health education, and physiotherapy-informed interventions within the creator community. As digital storytelling continues to grow as both a profession and a cultural practice, the responsibility to protect the health of those who sustain it becomes increasingly important to acknowledge.

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