

ANALYSIS OF CLINICAL PARAMETER AND TUMOR NECROSIS FACTOR-ALPHA LEVELS ON KERATINIZED TISSUE AROUND IMPLANT AND TOOTH

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ABSTRACT

Studies have shown the importance of keratinized tissue around implants to prevent peri-implant diseases. This study aims to analyze the correlation of keratinized tissue around implants and teeth with clinical parameter scores and tumor necrosis factor-alpha (TNF- α) levels. A cross-sectional study of 20 adults with 20 dental implants and 20 contralateral teeth that have functioned suprastructurally for more than 3 months without any systemic diseases. Keratinized tissue around implant and tooth was measured. The clinical examinations included the plaque index (PI), papilla bleeding index (PBI), and pocket depth (PD). Peri-implant sulcus fluid (PISF) and gingival crevicular fluid were collected to measure TNF- α levels. Spearman's test was used to analyze the correlation. Significant differences were found between keratinized tissue around the implant in PI, PBI, and PD ($P < 0.05$). Differences were found between wide and narrow keratinized tissue around contralateral teeth in PI and PBI ($P < 0.05$) but not in PD. TNF- α levels were not correlate to keratinized tissue width around implant and contralateral tooth ($P > 0.05$). Strong correlations were found between each clinical parameter score and the keratinized tissue width of peri-implant tissue in PI, PBI, and PD. The clinical parameter score between wide and narrow keratinized tissue around implant showed strong correlation, particularly in PBI. This shows the importance of adequate keratinized tissue around implant to maintain implant stability.

Key words: Clinical parameter, Keratinized tissue, Peri-implant, Tumor necrosis factor-alpha

Introduction

The increase in dental implant treatments today as a treatment of choice for replacing missing teeth has led to increased patient expectancy regarding the treatment results. However, failure and complications in dental implant treatments have also increased [1–14]. Papaspyridakos *et al.* classified the criteria for implant treatment success based on the implant level, peri-implant soft tissue level, prosthetic level, and patient satisfaction level [4, 15–17]. Studies have shown the importance of keratinized tissue around an implant to prevent peri-implant diseases [3, 5, 18–28]. Implant success can be assessed using clinical and immunological examinations [6, 8, 19, 29, 30]. Peri-implant sulcular fluid (PISF) may contain biomarkers to diagnose and predict future diseases. Studies show that the highest level of biomarkers found in peri-implant diseases was tumor necrosis factor-alpha (TNF- α) [1, 31–34]. This study aims to analyze the correlation of keratinized tissue around an implant and tooth with clinical parameter scores and TNF- α levels.

Materials and Methods

This work is a cross-sectional study of dental implants and their contralateral teeth. The subjects were patients who underwent dental implant placement at the dental hospital during the recall program. The participants were 20 adults

aged 17–60-year-old with at least one loaded dental implant that functioned suprastructurally for more than 3 months and its contralateral tooth. The sample size was calculated using the formula for estimating the sample size in the analytic-bivariate-comparative test. All participants gave their informed consent to participate in this study and were seen by two examiners. Subjects with systemic diseases were excluded.

The keratinized tissue width around the implant–tooth was measured from the free gingival margin to the mucogingival junction on the mid-buccal using a UNC-15 probe [35]. The measurement of the width of the keratinized tissue was classified into two groups according to Lang and L  e: Group I, which has a keratinized width of <2 mm (narrow), and Group II, which has a keratinized width of ≥ 2 mm (wide) [36].

The keratinized tissue phenotype was examined using transparencies when the probe was inserted into the sulcus and subsequently divided into two groups: thick and thin phenotypes [37]. The clinical parameter score was evaluated using the plaque index (PI), papilla bleeding index (PBI), and pocket depth (PD) [23, 35]. The peri-implant status was measured using a titanium or plastic implant probe to avoid damaging the peri-implant tissue. The immunological condition was evaluated by collecting peri-implant sulcus fluid (PISF) and gingival crevicular fluid (GCF) from the

sulcus using sterile paper points number 40 and then inserting them into a tube containing a physiological solution of phosphate-buffered saline. The TNF- α level was determined using the enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay test. For proper isolation, cotton rolls were used in the buccal and lingual areas of the study site before sample collection [19, 20, 38, 39].

IBM SPSS Statistics v22, New York, USA was used for the statistical analysis to calculate all the parameter outcomes. The groups were compared for the two-site within-participant design. The measurements at the implant site–contralateral tooth site were calculated, and independent *t*-tests were performed to determine the difference between the groups. Spearman's correlation analysis was performed to evaluate the strength and direction of the correlation. **Figure 1** shows the mechanism of the research from sample collection to data analysis.

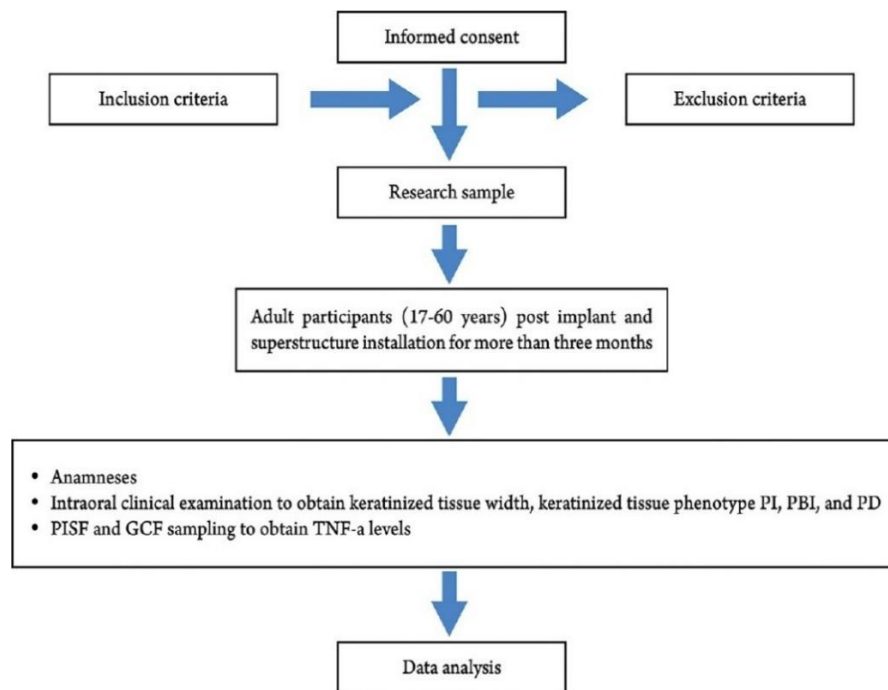


Figure 1. Diagram showing the mechanism of sample collection. TNF- α – Tumor necrosis factor alpha, PI – Plaque index, PBI – Papilla bleeding index, PD – Pocket depth, PISF – Peri implant sulcular fluid, GCF – Gingival crevicular fluid

Results and Discussion

The proportion of wide and narrow keratinized tissue was relatively equal on both the implant and the contralateral tooth. All the samples collected had a thick phenotype in the

posterior region. All implant designs found in the study were at the bone level. Most of the implant samples had an adjacent tooth (75%), a medium implant diameter (65%), a medium-length (60%), and cement-retained prosthesis (75%) (**Tables 1 and 2**).

Table 1. Proportion of subjects based on peri-implant keratinized tissue characteristics

Keratinized tissue characteristics	<i>n</i>	Proportion (%)
Keratinized tissue width (mm)		
Narrow (<2)	11	55
Wide (≥ 2)	9	45
Keratinized tissue phenotype		
Thick	20	100
Thin	0	0
Adjacent tooth		
Present	15	75
Absent	5	25
Implant position		
Anterior	0	0

Posterior	20	100
Implant diameter (mm)		
Small (<4)	6	30
Medium (4-<5)	13	65
Large (≥ 5)	1	5
Implant length (mm)		
Short (<8)	1	5
Medium (8-10)	12	60
Long (>10)	7	35
Implant design		
Bone level	20	100
Tissue level	0	0
Prosthesis		
Screw retained	1	5
Cement retained	15	75
Screw-and cement-retained	4	20

n - number of teeth

Table 2. Distribution of keratinized tissue around implant's contralateral tooth

Keratinized gingiva characteristics	<i>n</i>	Proportion (%)
Keratinized tissue width (mm)		
Narrow (<2)	2	10
Wide (≥ 2)	18	90
Keratinized tissue phenotype		
Thick	20	100
Thin	0	0

n - number of teeth

The mean distribution of the keratinized tissue width around the implant was half that of its contralateral tooth. The clinical mean parameter score showed that the soft tissue around the implant and its contralateral tooth was classified as mild inflammation (**Table 3**).

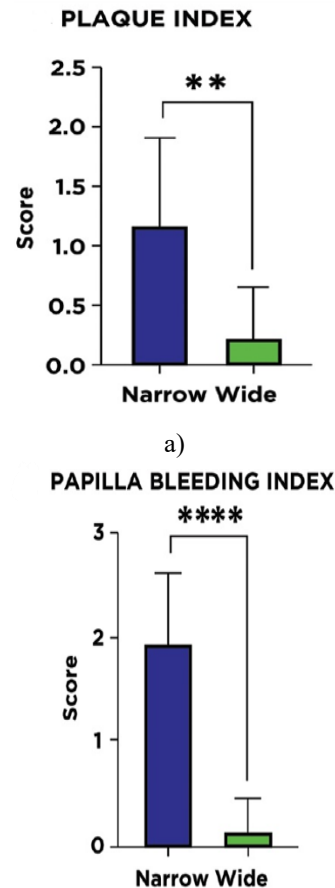
Table 3. Mean distribution of keratinized tissue characteristics, clinical parameter scores and tumour necrosis factor-levels in implant and contralateral tooth

Keratinized tissue characteristics, clinical parameter scores, and TNF- α levels	Mean \pm SD	
	Implant (<i>n</i> =20)	Contralateral tooth (<i>n</i> =20)
Keratinized tissue width (mm)	1.67 \pm 1.26	3 \pm 1.01
PI	0.75 \pm 0.78	0.60 \pm 0.60
PBI	1.10 \pm 1.07	0.65 \pm 0.93
PD (mm)	2.65 \pm 0.99	2.25 \pm 0.78
TNF- α levels (ng/mL)	214.43 \pm 6.89	216.45 \pm 5.78

SD - Standard deviation; PI - Plaque index; PBI - Papilla bleeding index; PD - Pocket depth; TNF- α - Tumour necrosis factor- α ; *n* - number of implants/teeth

A comparative analysis between the wide and narrow keratinized tissue groups around the implant showed a significant difference in PI ($P = 0.003$), PBI ($P = 0.000$), and

PD ($P = 0.004$) but not in the TNF- α levels ($P = 0.606$) between the groups (**Figure 2**). The comparison between the wide and narrow keratinized tissue groups around the tooth showed a significant difference in PI ($P = 0.020$) and PBI ($P = 0.027$) but not in PD ($P = 0.160$) and TNF- α ($P = 0.236$) (**Figure 3**). No difference was found in the clinical parameter score and TNF- α levels between the groups of implants and their contralateral teeth in either wide or narrow keratinized tissue (**Table 4**).



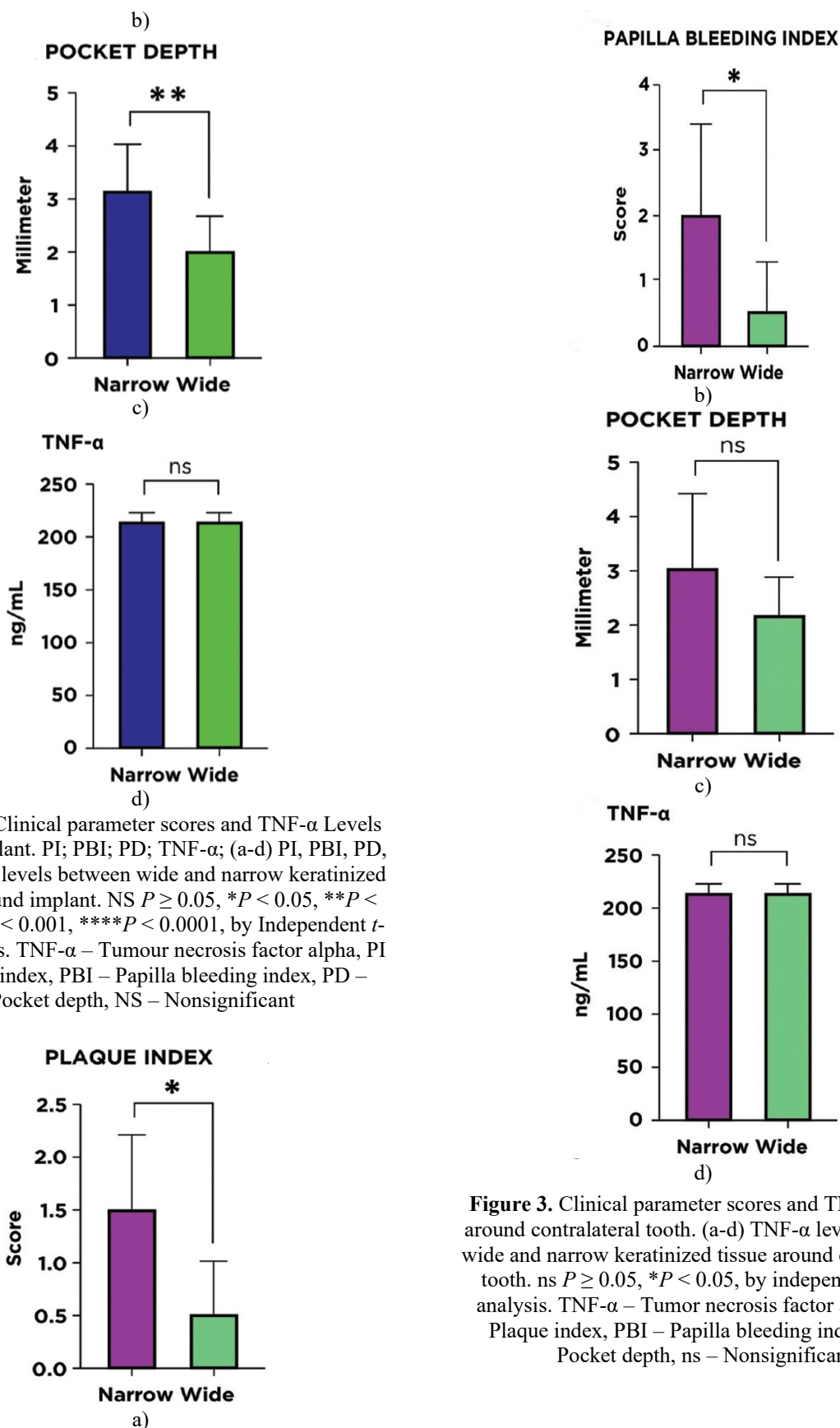


Figure 2. Clinical parameter scores and TNF- α Levels around implant. PI; PBI; PD; TNF- α ; (a-d) PI, PBI, PD, and TNF- α levels between wide and narrow keratinized tissue around implant. NS $P \geq 0.05$, $*P < 0.05$, $**P < 0.01$, $***P < 0.001$, $****P < 0.0001$, by Independent t -test analysis. TNF- α – Tumour necrosis factor alpha, PI – Plaque index, PBI – Papilla bleeding index, PD – Pocket depth, NS – Nonsignificant

Figure 3. Clinical parameter scores and TNF- α levels around contralateral tooth. (a-d) TNF- α levels between wide and narrow keratinized tissue around contralateral tooth. ns $P \geq 0.05$, $*P < 0.05$, by independent t -test analysis. TNF- α – Tumor necrosis factor alpha, PI – Plaque index, PBI – Papilla bleeding index, PD – Pocket depth, ns – Nonsignificant

Table 4. Differences in clinical parameter scores and tumour necrosis factor- α levels between implant and contralateral tooth of wide and narrow keratinized tissue

Clinical parameter scores and TNF- α levels	Wide			Narrow		
	Implant	Contralateral tooth	<i>P</i>	Implant	Contralateral tooth	<i>P</i>
Id	0.22 \pm 0.44	0.58 \pm 0.61	0.128	1.18 \pm 0.75	1.50 \pm 0.71	0.591
PBI	0.11 \pm 0.33	0.53 \pm 0.77	0.137	1.91 \pm 0.70	2.00 \pm 1.41	0.884
PD	2.00 \pm 0.71	2.16 \pm 0.69	0.579	3.18 \pm 0.87	3.00 \pm 1.41	0.805
TNF- α levels	215.34 \pm 5.34	216.98 \pm 5.43	0.461	213.68 \pm 8.12	211.76 \pm 7.43	0.763

$P < 0.05$ = Significantly different (Independent *t*-test). PI - Plaque index; PBI - Papilla bleeding index; PD - Pocket depth; TNF- α - Tumour necrosis factor- α ; *P* - probability/significant value

Table 5 presents Spearman's correlation analysis. Statistically significant correlations were found between the clinical parameter score and the keratinized tissue width of peri-implant tissue in PI ($r = -0.630$), PBI ($r = -0.881$), and PD ($r = -0.636$). The TNF- α levels revealed a very weak correlation with the keratinized tissue width of peri-implant tissue ($r = +0.166$).

Table 5. Correlation of keratinized tissue width around implant and contralateral tooth with clinical parameter scores and tumour necrosis factor- α levels

Clinical parameter scores and TNF- α levels	Keratinized tissue width			
	Implant		Contralateral tooth	
	<i>r</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>P</i>
PI	(-) 0.630	0.003*	(-) 0.440	0.052
PBI	(-) 0.881	0.000*	(-) 0.443	0.050
PD	(-) 0.636	0.003*	(-) 0.255	0.278
TNF- α levels	(+) 0.166	0.485	(+) 0.347	0.134

The value of * $P < 0.05$ = Significantly different. Spearman's test (test two numeric-categorical unpaired groups). Value of *r* (-) opposite direction, (+) same direction. The value of *r*: 0- \leq 0.25 very weak, 0.26- \leq 0.5 medium, 0.51- \leq 0.75 strong, 0.76- \leq 1 very strong. PI - Plaque index; PBI - Papilla bleeding index; PD - Pocket depth; TNF- α - Tumour necrosis factor- α ; *r* - Correlation coefficient; *P* - Probability/significant value

Peri-implant and periodontal soft tissue morphologies are similar in appearance and structure, and they are distinguished by their resistance to bacterial invasion [23, 25, 40-43]. Natural teeth have the periodontium as a healthy defense mechanism, which consists of the gingiva, epithelium sulcus, epithelial attachments, and connective tissue attachments. Free gingiva is the area where biofilm enters the crevicular area and stimulates the activation of neutrophils and lymphocytes, resulting in an inflammatory response [23, 44]. The complex gingival connective tissue fibers form bundles, and some enter the cementum, alveolar bone, and cements/enamel junction, acting as a protective mechanism.

Implants have less protection than natural teeth because implants are trans-tissue elements in which the abutments, implant neck, and restorations penetrate the tissue and adapt without entering the cementum. Supracrestal collagen fibers in the peri-implant are parallel to the axis of the implant axis with a circular shape, thus making their attachment more susceptible to inflammation [3, 18, 24, 25, 45, 46]. Peri-implant soft tissue is also important in maintaining esthetic function and masticatory pressure, but its ability to regenerate is restricted due to the limited number of cells and lack of vascularity [25, 47, 48].

Keratinized tissue includes free and attached gingiva from the gingival margin to the mucogingival junction [22, 36, 49]. Compared to the nonkeratinized tissue, this tissue is usually thicker, denser, and strongly attached to the underlying bone as a protective function between the oral environment and the underlying dental implant [50]. The width of the keratinized tissue is the most frequent characteristic studied for its effect on the peri-implant status associated with discomfort when brushing teeth [5]. The thickness of keratinized tissue, also known as the AAP 2017: periodontal phenotype, is often associated with bone loss if the thickness is inadequate [10, 21, 51-54].

Several clinical studies have reported high gingival bleeding index, PI, PD, attachment loss, and soft tissue recession in areas with narrow keratinized tissue (<2 mm), but others have reported that the width of the keratinized tissue did not affect the gingival index where bone loss occurs [3, 6, 8, 19, 23, 25, 38]. Lang and Löe demonstrated that healthy periodontal tissue requires a good soft tissue seal around the teeth and that dental implants require at least 2 mm of keratinized tissue with 1 mm of attachment [36]. The success of implant treatment is osseointegration, and the implant must be covered by tissue. The role of soft tissue in long-term implant maintenance is to prevent external pressure, risk of infection, and epithelial growth [35].

In this study, keratinized tissue around the implant and its contralateral tooth was measured to find the correlation of both tissues with the clinical parameter score and TNF- α levels. The data showed mean distribution of keratinized tissue width around the implant (1.67 [\pm 1.26]) was half that

around its contralateral tooth ($3 [\pm 1.01]$). Apart from peri-implant tissue characteristics, several other implant-related data were also collected, such as presence of neighboring teeth, implant position, implant diameter, implant length, implant design, and implant prosthesis. It was found that the entire implant position was in the posterior area and using a bone-level implant system. This proportion is good enough so that the study sample is uniform, as shown in **Tables 1 and 2**. The posterior area is reported to have a higher tendency for biological complications to occur [39].

Implant treatment fails when osseointegration is not maintained; this is usually caused by peri-implant diseases [4, 8, 9, 18, 21, 29, 55–59]. A meta-analysis reported that the prevalence of peri-implantitis was 22% (95% confidence interval: 14–30) [60]. Peri-implant disease is an inflammatory process caused by bacteria in the osseointegrated tissue around the implant [8, 9, 29, 40, 55, 61]. Peri-implant diseases are classified into two categories: peri-implant mucositis and peri-implantitis. Peri-implant mucositis is an inflammatory reaction of peri-implant soft tissue, i.e., reversible, whereas peri-implantitis involves hard tissue and is irreversible. Corrêa *et al.* found that the presence of periodontal pathogens is necessary but not sufficient for the initiation of peri-implantitis.

Studies have suggested that osteo-immunoinflammatory mediators (i.e., cytokines) play an important role in peri-implant tissue damage [62–64]. TNF- α is a pro-inflammatory cytokine involved in systemic and local inflammation through different signaling pathways. It induces the upregulation of adhesion molecules on leukocytes and endothelial cells, stimulates the production of chemokines that recruit leukocytes to areas of inflammation, and increases the production of collagenase and prostaglandin enzymes, thereby triggering collagen breakdown and bone resorption [63, 65]. The increase in plaque and bleeding in response to probing of the dental implants may be associated with a high risk of mucositis and peri-implantitis.

The success of implant treatment can be evaluated clinically, immunologically, microbiologically, and radiographically. Soft tissue evaluation is carried out after at least 3 months of implant functioning in the oral cavity [6, 8, 29, 66]. There are various ways to measure the thickness of keratinized tissue, including visual examination, placement of a periodontal probe in the sulcus, direct measurement using a needle, ultrasound, and three-dimensional radiographic examination [37]. Clinical parameters, such as PI, gingival bleeding, PD, recession, and level of attachment, are commonly used to detect inflammation in peri-implant soft tissue [7, 8, 21]. The mean scores of clinical parameters such as PI and PD were relatively the same between the implants and the contralateral teeth, except that the PBI in the implants was almost twice that of the contralateral teeth. However, in terms of clinical parameter scores obtained,

both soft tissue around the implant and the contralateral tooth have mild inflammation, as shown in **Table 3**.

Immunological evaluation in the form of TNF- α is the highest in participants with peri-implant tissue inflammation [9, 40, 55]. Recent studies have demonstrated the use of peri-implant crevicular fluid (PICF) as a good diagnostic tool for detecting the early pathological stages of peri-implant disease [39]. Both PISF and GCF originate from the vessels of the tissue plexus around the implant and the contralateral tooth. These fluids accommodate molecules whose levels may reflect both local and systemic inflammation [67]. Belibasakis reported higher concentrations of TNF- α , interleukin-17, Interleukin-1b, and nitric oxide in the PICF of patients with peri-implantitis [29]. Conversely, this study found no difference in the TNF- α level between the groups of wide and narrow keratinized tissue around the implant. One possible reason for TNF- α being not significant is that the clinical parameter scores of PI (0.75), PBI (1.1), and PD (2.65) were still categorized as mild inflammation, thus causing the low expression of TNF- α .

The necessity of keratinized tissue around implants has been extensively debated and is of concern. Many studies have reported differing results regarding the link between the two, but the extent of the correlation between them has yet to be ascertained. The presence of keratinized tissue around an implant is considered to provide a comfortable environment for daily oral cleaning [5, 21]. Techniques such as free gingival palatal grafts have been performed to correct the inadequate condition of keratinized tissue. Further research with more subjects and long-term evaluations is suggested to confirm the role of keratinized tissue in implant maintenance. Impaired oral hygiene is responsible for the manifestation of tissue inflammation around the implant in narrow keratinized tissue.

This study showed that the clinical parameter score was statistically different between the groups of wide and narrow keratinized tissue around the implant with PI ($P = 0.003$) and PBI ($P = 0.000$) but not in PD ($P = 0.004$) and TNF- α ($P = 0.606$). Then, a comparison between the groups of wide and narrow keratinized tissue around the tooth also showed significant differences in PI ($P = 0.020$) and PBI ($P = 0.027$) but not in PD ($P = 0.160$) and TNF- α ($P = 0.276$). Even though the soft tissue around natural teeth, which acts as a protective mechanism, is strong, it still tends to increase the clinical parameter score if the keratinized tissue width is inadequate. Spearman correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant correlation between each clinical parameter score and keratinized tissue width of peri-implant tissue with coefficients of PI ($r = -0.630$), PBI ($r = -0.881$), and PD ($r = -0.636$). This result indicates the importance of keratinized tissue around the implant to maintain gingival health and prevent peri-implant disease [18, 39].

Conclusion

The keratinized tissue width around implants showed a strong correlation with PI, PBI, and PD. This finding is important in maintaining implant integrity for long-term implant stability. The immunological parameter found no difference in the TNF- α levels between the groups of wide and narrow keratinized tissue around the implant. This shows the importance of adequate keratinized tissue around an implant to maintain implant integrity.

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Conflict of interest: None

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Ethics statement: None

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