

# **BACKGROUND**

- US dental workforce has been experiencing a notable decline in the number of dental assistants (DAs); the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this decline<sup>1</sup>
- Job satisfaction has long been recognized as a key determinant of staff retention, quality of care, and overall workplace environment<sup>2,3</sup>
- Contributing factors to job dissatisfaction among DAs have been identified, but workplace factors among DAs are not well understood<sup>4</sup>

# **STUDY OBJECTIVE**

• Assess the association between workplace characteristics, practice patterns, personal factors, and job satisfaction among DAs



### Data Sources

- Utilized cross-sectional data collected through an online survey in 2022 by the Health Policy Institute at the American Dental Association (ADA), in collaboration with professional organizations for DAs
- 4,255 current or past DAs from 50 states and District of Columbia (DC) participated in the survey (response rate=7.0%)
- 2,945 survey respondents who reported current employment in either full-time or part-time positions were included in the data analysis

### **Statistical Analyses**

- "On a scale of 1 to 10, how satisfied are you in your current role?" (1=Not at all satisfied, 10=extremely satisfied)"
- Satisfied Group: Very Satisfied (scored 8-10); Somewhat Satisfied (scored 6-7)
- Dissatisfied Group: Very Dissatisfied (scored 1-3); Somewhat Dissatisfied (scored 4-5)
- Descriptive analyses were employed to understand differences between groups
- Multivariable logistic regressions were used to explore the relationship between workplace factors and job satisfaction by estimating odds ratios (OR) and 95% confidence intervals (CI)

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- Majority of DAs reported high job satisfaction, with 59.6% very satisfied and 21.6% somewhat satisfied, while 18.8% expressed dissatisfaction with their current job
- Top 3 workplace factors contributing to job satisfaction/ dissatisfaction *(Figure 1)*:
  - Job Satisfaction: Positive workplace culture, helping patients improve oral health, and work-life balance
- Job Dissatisfaction: Insufficient pay, overworked, and negative workplace culture

- Helping patients improve oral health Safety is not/is a priority Jnpleasant/pleasant patients Practice philosophy Rigid/flexible work schedule Work-life balance Inadeguate/adeguate benefits Poor/good communication in the practice Lack of/opportunity for growth and advancement Negative/positive workplace culture Overworked/reasonable workload
- Insufficient/fair 80%
- Job Satisfaction: Work-life balance, positive workplace culture, and pleasant patients (ie, friendly, polite, and respectful)
- Job Dissatisfaction: Insufficient pay, overworked, and negative workplace culture



# Job Satisfaction in Dentistry: Exploring Influencing Factors Among Dental Assistants

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Dental assistants are more satisfied with their job when working in environments with a favorable workplace culture, ample opportunities for growth and advancement, effective communication within the practice, work-life balance, alignment with practice philosophy, and fair pay.

FIGURE 1. Workplace Factors Contributing to Job Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction



60%

 Most frequent combinations of the top 3 workplace factors contributing to job satisfaction/dissatisfaction:

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- Compared to the Somewhat Satisfied group, the Very Satisfied group were more likely to work in a workplace with:
- Positive workplace culture (OR=2.84, 95% CI=2.13-3.78)
- Opportunity for growth and advancement (OR=2.11, 95%) CI=1.51-2.96)
- Good communication in the practice (OR=1.69, 95% CI=1.13-2.54)



<sup>a</sup> Multivariable logistic regression estimates (odds ratio [OR] and 95% confidence interval [CI]) were adjusted for age, race and ethnicity, employment status, tenure, primary practice setting, urban/rural location, and geographic region.







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- DAs are more satisfied with their job when working in environments with a favorable workplace culture, ample opportunities for growth and advancement, effective communication within the practice, work-life balance, alignment with practice philosophy, and fair pay
- Study findings emphasize the need to identify strategies for improving workplace environments and promoting well-being and retention of DAs
- More comprehensive understanding of diverse work-related factors influencing job satisfaction can also guide initiatives to reduce attrition, turnover, and shortages in the oral health workforce

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