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## 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

## METHODS

### 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)



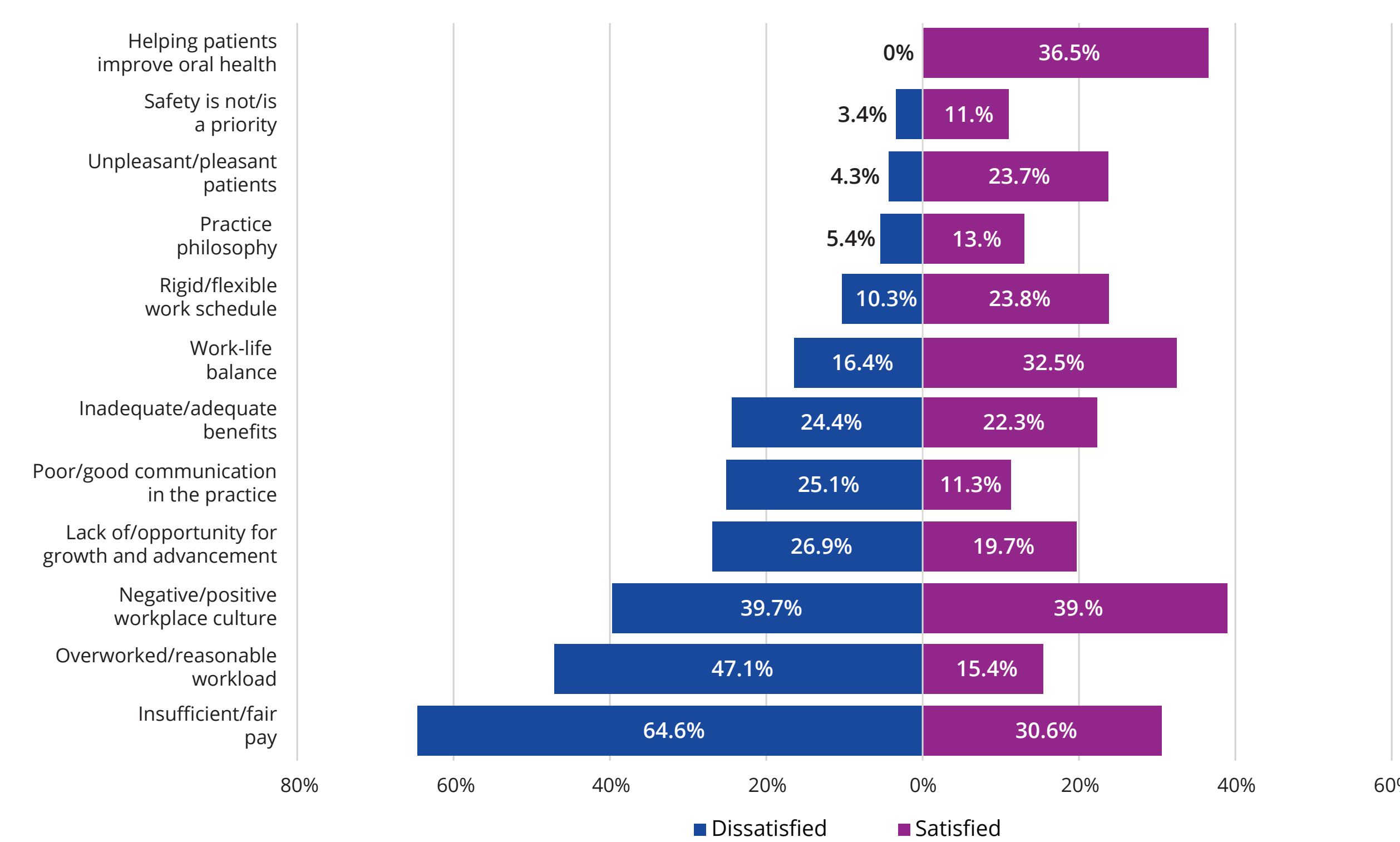
Dental assistants are more satisfied with their job when working in environments with a favorable workplace culture, ample opportunities for growth and advancement, effective communication within the practice, work-life balance, alignment with practice philosophy, and fair pay.



## RESULTS

- 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

**FIGURE 1. Workplace Factors Contributing to Job Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction**



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

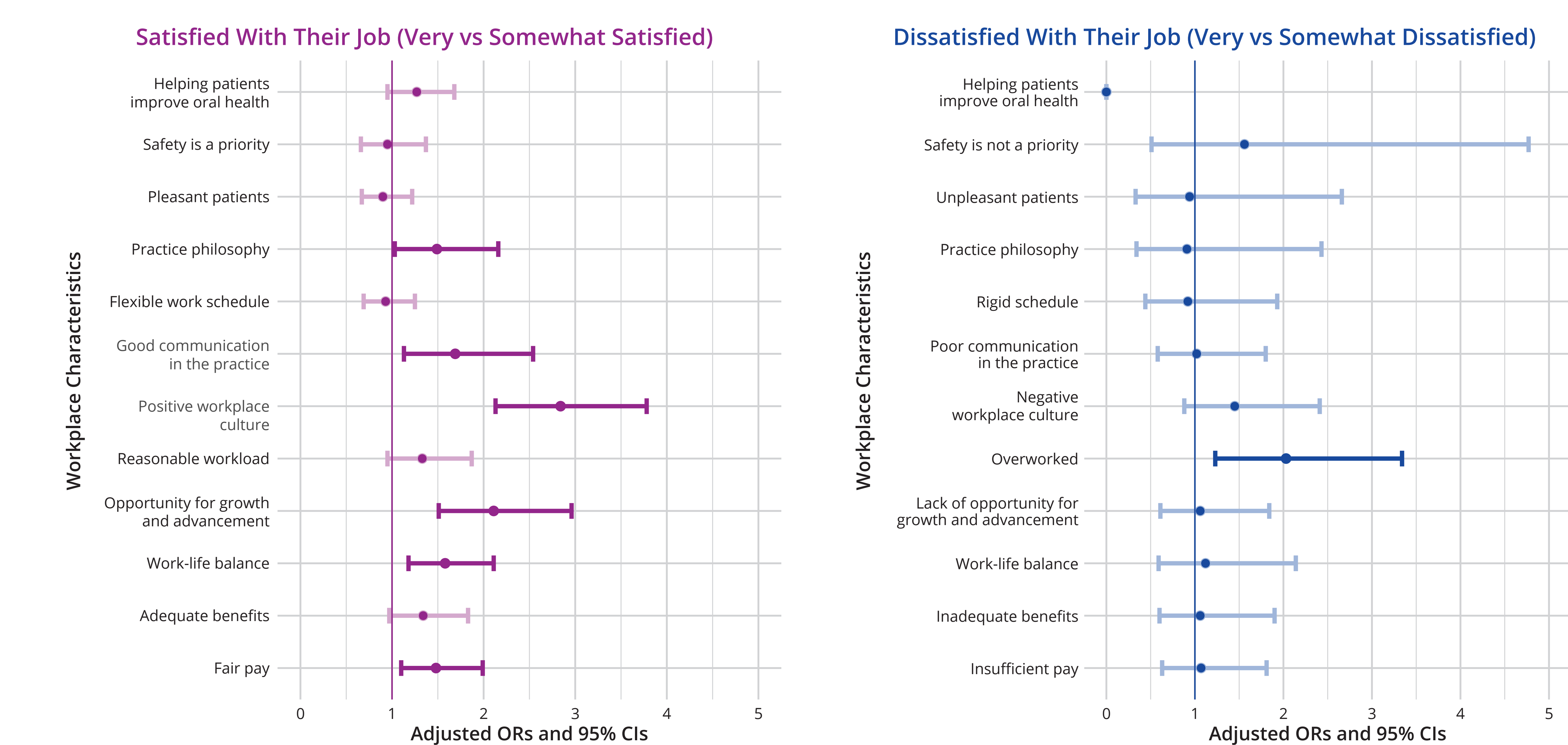
## RESULTS

- 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)

## RESULTS

- Work-life balance (OR=1.58, 95% CI=1.18-2.11)
- Practice philosophy (OR=1.49, 95% CI=1.03-2.16)
- Fair pay (OR=1.48, 95% CI=1.10-1.99)
- Very Dissatisfied group were more likely to work in a workplace with excessive workloads (OR=2.03, 95% CI=1.23-3.34) than the Somewhat Dissatisfied group

**FIGURE 2. Adjusted Associations Between Workplace Factors and Job Satisfaction<sup>a</sup>**



<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.

## IMPLICATIONS

- 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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